

Lamenting Prayer

God wants to hear our voice
even in our pain
the *more* so, in our pain

—
Lament is ...

“The practice of being sad before God.”

Lament psalms offer ...

- *models* for lament
- *a safe place* for lament

Some types (or genres) of Psalm	No.
Trust	5
Wisdom	10
Praise	15
Thanksgiving	15
Royal and Enthronement	18
Lament	66

Let the genre guide our engagement with each psalm

Lament psalms invite us
to bring our life to the psalms
and the psalms to our life



The language of Lament – sampling the psalms

Ps 22 -My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer
Yet you are holy, ...

*A prayer of Israel
AND for us,
Angrily accuses
Creator God*

Ps 32 - While I kept silence, my body wasted away
Then I acknowledged my sin to you ...
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

*To come to God
with our guilt
Not stay silent*

Ps 88 - For my soul is full of troubles,
You have put me in the depths of the Pit, ...
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,

*A role reversal?
Puts God in the dock*

Psalm 69

Save me , O God!

For waters have
come up to my
neck.

**The Monastics immersed themselves in the psalms
singing the whole Psalter in a week (or two)**

– **Six Elements of a Psalm of Lament**

They appear in one way or another, in virtually all laments,
not necessarily in the same order

1. Address – to God

2. Complaint

3. Trust

4. Deliverance – ask for help

5. Assurance – expect help

6. Praise

Complain

– to **God**

Trust enough
to **Ask**

Expect help
& give **Praise**

**These interacting voices create
a SAFE PLACE for our anger & hurt**

Voices in the lament dialogue

Who is speaking?

And to whom?

Individual / me

God

Community / Israel / Church

The enemy

The enemy / taunts

Self / my soul

God

Community / Israel / Church

**“ Hebrew imagination is incapable of monologue
it must use conversation & dialogue -
in which God is fully invested ”**

— Steve Jones, a conversation, recounted at KST,
A Carmelite monk: **“in our tradition we have learned
to open our wounds before God in prayer”**

Steve: we can go before God and sit peacefully in
prayer and say - **‘look God, at *THIS* that I’m surprised
to find going on in me, today! Look at ... *THIS!*’ ”**

**[Me: Is this because this brother is
steeped in psalms of lament?]**

When I am sad, do I...

Turn away from God *OR* Turn to Him

- when **shame & guilt** claws away in me
- when **pain & hurt** eat away at me
- when **confusion & condemnation** takes a hold

Ps 27 (NLT) My heart has heard you say,

“Come & talk with me.”

And my heart responds,

“Lord, I am coming!”

Psalm 42 *A psalm of individual lament*

Longing for God and His help in distress. To the leader.

**¹As the deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.**

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and behold the face of God?

**³ My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”**

—

**4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng, and led them
in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.**

**5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and
why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help ⁶ and my God.**

**My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan
and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.**

**⁷ Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows have gone over me.**

**⁸ By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
at night his song is with me, a prayer
to the God of my life**

**⁹ I say to God, my rock, “Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully because
the enemy oppresses me?”**

—

**10 As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me, while they
say to me continually, “Where is your God?”**

**11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.**

God wants to hear our voice in our pain

We have permission to complain, angrily!

Lament psalms show us how:

❖ ***As I bring my honest **complaint** to Him, & **only Him*****

❖ ***As I engage with voices of **trust*****

and begin again to **ask** for His help

❖ ***As I join with voices of **expectation** that***

He will rescue me

❖ ***I will come to **praise** Him once again***

Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help & my God