Holy Pascha Week

- 2026-04-05: Monday Eve
- 2026-04-08: Eve of Thursday
- 2026-04-10: Good Friday 11th Hour

2026-04-05: Monday Eve

Background

- Sacrifice System
- Jews in Diaspora - if they brought a sheep or an ox or doves... the animals could not withstand a long journey. Or if they did, they might arrive damaged and not suitable for sacrifices.
  - So the chief priests and the Temple would offer animals to be sacrificed
  - But if you are coming from outside, your money was worthless in the Temple...
  - So you need to change it with money changers who take a certain percentage for the service of changing the money
  - And their scales were unfair
  - And they would overprice the animals
- Two problems:
  - Buying and Selling in the House of the Lord ("Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16))
  - Thievery and Robbery ("You have made it a den of thieves")
- The House of God lost its reverence and its sanctity
- The House of Prayer became a house of buying and selling

What is the House of God to me?

- Social House
  - "I go to see my friends"
  - Sometimes someone will say "I don't come to Church because I don't know anyone..." - you don't know the Lord of the House??
  - It is good for us to have fellowship together after the Liturgy, as we do; but it CANNOT be my main goal. Once I turn the Church into a Social House, instead of a House of Prayer, I risk falling away from the Church
- Service House
  - This is the one who comes only for his assigned service
  - I have service on this day, I am here and I am early and I am committed and dedicated and my service is perfect. If I don't have service? You will never see me.
  - I am here if I have a lesson to give, or a hymn to teach, or a liturgy to lead, or to serve in the altar, or to do my water service, or to make orban... but if I don't have service, don't expect me to be in the Church.
  - That's not the purpose of the House of God!
- Intellectual Endeavor
  - Someone who comes because they like knowledge, they like theology, want to learn something new
  - "We never learn anything new in Sunday School, it's the same lessons"

    - "Abouna your sermon was the same as last week or the same as last year... give us something new."
    - Acts 17: [19] And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? [20] For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” [21] For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.
    - If the lessons are not new or I know them already, then don't expect to see my in the Church.
- Performance
    - Sometimes, someone may be fought with the temptation of the Church being a house of performance...
    - If I am not the one giving the lesson, don't expect to see me
    - If the microphone is not reaching me, or the cymbals are not reaching me, or the triangle is not here, don't expect to see me
- Routine
    - I come because I am used to it
    - "I showed up, I did my part." - maybe even "Now it's Your turn, God to do Your part."
    - And if there's any sort of inconvenience... don't expect to see me in the Church
- "Get Something"
    - I am here for comfort in a bad time
    - I am here for advice in a time of trouble
    - I am here for emotional relief when no one else will listen to me
    - But if life is good, no advice needed, content... don't expect to see my in the Church
    - "Did I feel something"
    - "Did I benefit"

What is the House of God really?

- House of Prayer
    - “For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7)
    - Where we go to pray, to speak to God, and hear His answer to me
- House of Healing
    - Hospital for Sinners
    - Sacramental Life (Yesterday’s Sermon)
    - “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15)
- House of Reconciliation
    - “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)

    - Some come to Church to win arguments… but we are on the side of peace
- House of Learning and Growing and Increasing and Improving
    - Readings, Sermons, Sunday School Lessons
    - From the servants and elders and role models
    - 1:1 Father of Confession
        - Sees where I am lacking and helps me to identify it, adjust it, and to grow
    - Not just an intellectual knowledge, but a Personal knowledge and an Experiential Knowledge
- House of Giving and Serving Others
    - To take the blessing of the service
    - ”The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” - 11th Hour Gospel
    - “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27)
    - “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” (Acts 2:44-45)

How to Revere the House of God

- Prepare Myself
    - "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12)
    - Physically, Spiritually, Socially
    - Be bathed, well-groomed, well-dressed, tonia is clean (deacons)
    - Be Reconciled with Others
    - Be Repentant
    - Spiritual Preparation
        - Vespers and Matins
        - Praying the Psalms
    - What do I wear?
        - Clothing reflects reverence
        - We dress for interviews, weddings, graduations, etc. - how much more for God's house? How much more to meet the King of Kings?
- Arrive on Time
    - "O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You" (Psalm 63:1)
    - Arriving Late: Rushing, distracting others, missing prayers
    - Arriving on Time: Calmness, Peace, Slow Down, Enter the Presence of God
- Pray
    - "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)
    - Participant not a spectator
    - Hymns and Responses
    - Lift up your hearts
- Behavior
    - How do I speak?
        - The Church is a House of Prayer, not a House of Conversation
        - Guard your tongue - silence gives room for prayer

        - If a conversation is needed, then quickly and in hushed tones
    - How do I walk?
        - Walk quietly, not running, with purpose, not aimlessly
        - Not chewing gum, not eating or drinking, not taking a phone call
    - How do I stand?
        - Attentively
        - Not leaning
        - Not sitting casually
- Undistracted
    - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)
    - Friends
    - Services
    - Devices

2026-04-08: Eve of Thursday

Judas and Mary

- The theme that the Church gives us today is the contrast between Judas and Mary, the sister of Lazarus.
  - 1st Hour: Plotting of the Pharisees
  - 3rd Hour: Judas agrees to betray Christ for 30 pieces of silver
  - 6th Hour: Mary takes a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes His feet with her hair and Judas complains
  - 9th Hour: The sinful woman at the house of Simon came with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil and poured it on His head and the disciples complained; Judas agrees to betray Christ for 30 pieces of silver
- There is a stark contrast here
  - Mary sacrificed a lot of money for Christ; Judas stole from the money box and betrayed Christ for 30 silver coins
  - Mary acted out of loyalty; Judas acted out of betrayal
  - Mary focused on serving another; Judas focused on himself
  - Mary kisses the feet of the Lord out of love and gratitude. Judas will betray the Lord with a kiss.
- It is clear that Mary did this out of love for Christ... and Judas also out of love, but for money.
  - Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

I want to focus today on Judas' betrayal of the Lord... and specifically, on the fact that the Lord Jesus loved Judas. And despite His love for Judas, Judas betrayed Him.

Prophecies

- 3rd Hour Psalm - ”His words were softened above oil. And they are arrows.”
  - The tune of Avchnon - starts very low and somber and sorrowful but in the middle “A-alleluia” and at the end “ey eye eyyyy”
- 6th Hour Prophecy from Amos - first three verses
-

Jesus loved Judas

- He chose him - even though He knew
  - "And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself;* and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor." (Luke 6:13-16)

- "But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him." (John 6:64)

- He entrusted him
  - He gave him authority (Luke 9:1-2, 6)
    - Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. [2] He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.
    - [6] So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.
  - He sent him to preach and heal
  - He allowed him to handle the money (John 12:6)
    - This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

- He endured his weaknesses
  - He endured his stealing from the money box (John 12:6)
  - He endured his hypocrisy
    - "Why wasn't this sold and given to the poor?" - while he steals from the money box
    - Judas was sent to preach - but he was preaching a message (the Truth) that he wasn't living
    - Christ allowed him to continue in his ministry, trying all the while to bring about his repentance
  - He endured his betrayal
    - Judas is sitting at the table of the Last Supper AFTER he had decided to betray the Lord; after he had agreed on a price!
    - Christ still feeds him and includes him and serves him
  - He endured his deception
    - "Is it I, Rabbi?" - he is still maintaining the appearance of innocence...
    - The Lord answers him "You have said it" but doesn't expose him to the others
  - He endured the kiss
    - "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"
    - Using a symbol of love... to carry out a betrayal
  - Christ's endurance is clear in that the disciples did not suspect Judas

- He served him
  - He served him personally... 1:1
    - He washed his feet
    - This is an intimate service
    - This is a humbling service
    - This is a physical service
  - He served him equally
    - He didn't rush through his turn and wash his feet less than the other disciples
    - He didn't skip him
    - He didn't treat him any differently

    - He served him until the end
        - This is just a few hours before the betrayal

- He warned him
    - Prophecy of Amos from 3rd Hour of Eve of Thursday
        - Israel worshipped idols
        - The Lord took away their food… but they did not return
        - So he took away rain for three months (no water) in some places… but they did not return
        - Parching and blight… but they did not return
        - Sent death… but they did not return
        - Fire… but they did not return
        - Consumed them like Sodom and Gomorrah… still, they did not return
    - "One of you will betray Me" - at the table
        - Telling him that He knows what is happening, but without exposing him.
        - Giving space to repent... didn't work
    - "Is it I? You have said it."
        - Telling him that He knows it is him, again without exposing him
        - More space to repent... didn't work
    - "He who dips the bread with me"
        - Now saying it in such a way that he might be exposed...
        - Maybe that will bring him to repentance... didn't work
    - Judas showed up with soldiers
        - "Friend, why have you come?" (Matthew 26:50)
        - Even then, the Lord gives him one last chance to repent... he doesn't take it

- He protected him
    - He protected his reputation among the disciples, in case he would repent
    - "Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am *He.* Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way,' that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.'" (John 18:8-9)
        - This is the same protection that was being offered to Judas
    - In the first Jewish Trial, with Annas the High Priest, "The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine." (John 18:19)
        - Christ ignores the question about His disciples and answers about His doctrine
        - Why would He ignore that?
        - Because He wants to protect His disciples. This is the same protection that was offered to Judas

- He left the door open for him
    - Even after he betrayed the Lord, he still could have returned. He could have repented. He could have come back to the disciples. He could have come back to the Church.
    - The door was open for his repentance - but he did not take it
    - St Peter denied => repented
    - Judas betrayed => despaired

Despite all this, Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus

The Lord Loves Us

- We talked a lot about Judas and how bad he is... but in truth, we are not so far from him.
- We are chosen...
  - Chosen by name
    - Even before we were born
    - **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you;" (Jeremiah 1:5)**
  - Chosen for a purpose
    - Chosen to live a life of holiness, to serve, to glorify God in our families and in our work and in our school
  - Chosen to experience God's love
  - Chosen in our community
  - Chosen for eternity
    - Grace - gift freely given not based on the worthiness of the receiver, but on the goodness of the giver
    - Baptised and Chrismated
    - Eucharist for eternal life
    - Life of Repentance (yesterday Fr Reweis' sermon) for forgiveness of sin
- We are entrusted...
  - With talents
  - With money
  - With 24 hours in the day
  - With various responsibilities... spouse, children, services
  - Parable of the Talents
    - **“For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey." (Matthew 25:14-15)**
- We are endured...
  - How many times do we fall?
  - How many weaknesses do we have?
  - And yet, the Lord still provides for us, He is still giving us food and water and shelter and a Church and jobs and money and leisure and entertainment...
  - **"*Through* the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. *They are* new every morning; Great *is* Your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)**
- We are served...
  - How many people did the Lord send to serve you?
  - Your parents
  - Your priests - most churches don't get three priests!
  - Your Sunday School servants
  - BRAVE Men Servants

    - Virtuous Women Servants
    - St Joseph Meeting Servants
    - The St Verina Cleaning Servants that are cleaning the church for you
    - The St Martha Aghapy Servants that are preparing nice meals for you
    - The Bethlehem Servants preparing Orban for liturgy and extra orban even for days without liturgy... like Sunday School, tasbeha, or extra for you
    - The servants who are visiting the sick and elderly
    - The servants who are asking about you and checking on you
    - The servants who are working in the background
    - Doesn't God send all these servants for my own benefit?
    - **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)**
- We are warned...
    - When Abouna or a Servant gives me a message, isn't that a warning from the Lord?
    - When I read a verse that rebukes me, isn't that a warning from the Lord?
    - When the Holy Spirit convicts me, isn't that a warning from the Lord?
    - **"Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days." (Proverbs 19:20)**
- We are protected...
    - In our basic needs
    - In our health
    - **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand." (John 10:27-29)**
    - "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)
    - "For You have covered us, helped us..." (Thanksgiving Prayer)
- The door is open for my repentance

How do I respond to God's Love

Judas responded with betrayal

- Recognize God's Love
    - **“We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)**
    - Pray
    - Read the Scripture
    - Reflect on God's love daily
    - Give thanks for His provision
    - Live contently
- Repent when we betray
    - **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)**
    - As Fr Reweis said yesterday, repentance is not a moment - it's a life.
    - Life of repentance

    - It means examining myself DAILY
    - It means receiving the Eucharist WEEKLY
    - It means sitting for confession MONTHLY
- Serve
    - When I am filled with God's love, His love will overflow from me and I will give from that love to others
    - Serve your family
    - Serve your Church
    - Serve your community
    - Serve those who are needy
    - **“A new commandment I give to you: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34)**

2026-04-10: Good Friday 11th Hour

Events of Good Friday

- 3 Religious (Jewish) Trials: Annas, Caiaphas, Sanhedrin
- 3 Civil (Roman) Trials: Pilate, Herod, Pilate
- 6th Hour: Crucifixion
- 9th Hour: Death of Christ
- 11th Hour: Taking Down from the Cross
- 12th Hour: Burial of Christ

Order of the 12th Hour

1. Opening the Curtain and changing the curtains to red
2. Prophecy from Lamentations of Jeremiah 3
3. Doxology of Pascha
    - One group inside, one group outside
4. Psalm Pekethronos
5. Four Gospels
    - Read quickly because the Lord was buried quickly
6. Exposition
7. 400 Kirie Eleyson
    - 100 East, West, North, South
8. Procession
    - 3 Altar, 3 Nave, 1 Altar
    - 12 Long Lord have mercy
9. Golgotha
10. 150 Psalms
    - First three psalms out loud
    - The rest inaudible

Paradoxes of the 12th Hour

- One of the themes of the 12th Hour is the Paradoxes
    - The Light of the World… in Darkness
    - The Way the Truth and the Life… Dead
    - The Resurrection and the Life… Buried in a Tomb
    - The Judge of all… judged and condemned
    - The King of Glory… without a throne
- The Church reflects these paradoxes and more with the prophecy of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and the Psalms of the hour.

Two Psalms

- The first one shows one side of the Paradox:
  - "They laid me in the lowest pit, in dark places and in the shadow of death. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."
  - The King is dead. He is buried. And His soul is in Hades, in the shadow of death and in the lowest pit.
- The second Psalm shows the other side of the Paradox:
  - "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; Your royal scepter is a scepter of uprightness. Myrrh and stacte and cassia pour forth from Your garments."
  - His throne is forever and ever - the heavenly throne.
  - When any King dies, his throne is given to the next one to reign... that's the norm. But not with This King. Because although He died, His throne is forever and no one can take it.
- The beginning of the second psalm - "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" is the hymn □□□ `□□□□□ . And these Paradoxes are also reflected in the tune of this hymn
  - It starts very somber... very mournful
  - Then it picks up "A -Alle ey ey..."
  - And by the end, it is a royal or rejoicing theme - "Ey eye eyyy ye eye eye ey"
- See how the Church is cultivating our senses and our mind to understand the deeper meaning!

Lamentations of Jeremiah

Even more than this, is the reading of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. The Prophecy of the 12th Hour.

Context

- Israel was split into two kingdoms - north and south. The north is called Israel and the south is called Judah. And all of the kings of the north were evil and corrupt and worshipped idols. And most of the kings of the south were the same. So the Lord brought His judgment on these kingdoms.
- The Assyrians came forth and took the northern kingdom captive. They tried to take the Southern Kingdom, but because of the prayer of King Hezekiah and the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord did not allow them to conquer. They were unable.
- So the Lord gave the Southern Kingdom approximately 130-140 years more mercy.
- This is the time when Jeremiah lived. And Jeremiah kept preaching repentance - repent because a captivity is coming. And he even preached how long the captivity would last. But the people did not repent.
- And in his lifetime, Jeremiah witnessed the captivity of the Southern Kingdom - the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the city wall, the towers, the houses, the royal palace, the Temple. Imagine that the Temple represents for you the presence of God in your midst... and all of a sudden it is destroyed. This means that God's glory has left the city.
- He is lamenting - weeping over Jerusalem.

    - Although he prophesied about it happening, when it happened he didn’t gloat at them; he didn’t say “I told you so” - he didn’t say “you should have listened…”
    - But he mourned; he wept; he lamented
    - He wrote Lamentations.
    - He wrote it as a song for those who are in captivity to sing it… to reflect on the fact that they did not repent; they did not return to the Lord.
- “How lonely sits the city *That was* full of people! *How* like a widow is she, Who *was* great among the nations! The princess among the provinces Has become a slave!
  3 Judah has gone into captivity, Under affliction and hard servitude; She dwells among the nations, She finds no rest;
  All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.” (Lamentations 1:1, 3)

Structure & Interpretation

- Five Lamentations
    - 1st, 2nd, 4th - 22 verses each; based on the Hebrew alphabet
    - 3rd Lamentation - 66 verses; every three verses are based on a letter of the Hebrew alphabet
    - 5th Lamentation - also 22 verses, but not based on the alphabet
- The point of making acrostic songs or poems is so that they are easy (for the Jews) to memorize them to be able to sing them often
- The Church arranges for us to read Lamentations 3 in the 12th Hour of Good Friday at the hour of the burial of the Lord Christ
- Structure of Third Lamentation
  1. The passions of the Lord Christ (1 - 21)
  2. The hope in God’s mercies (22 – 39)
  3. A call to repentance (40 - 42)
  4. The fruits of sin (43 - 54)
  5. A comfort for the believers (55 - 66)
- Interpretation of Lamentations
    - When we read these lamentations, we can interpret each one and each verse in three dimensions
        - Historical - where "I" is Jeremiah
        - Christological - where "I" is the Lord Christ
        - Personal - where "I" is Me

Passions of the Lord Christ

Verse 1

"I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." (Lamentations 3:1)

- Jeremiah
    - Even though the Jews tormented him, his family betrayed him him, the kings wronged him, he was beaten, he was humiliated, he was imprisoned, in the end he says "I have seen affliction by the rod of God's wrath"

    - He doesn't blame the affliction on anyone, doesn't get upset... I am seeing what God permitted to happen to me for my sake - for my good, for my growth, for my adjustment.
- Me
    - I have seen affliction - I have endured hardship in my life; difficulties, struggles. But do I cry and complain and blame... or do I surrender to God and say "God you know best." If this is from you, I accept it; and if it is not from you, I know You have a plan and You will take it and bring something good from it.
    - Of course, not everyone is at this level - but at the very least, we have all seen affliction.
- Christ
    - The Christological meaning is that the Lord Jesus bore the afflictions this whole week.
    - "Surely He has borne our griefs
      And carried our sorrows;
      Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
      Smitten by God, and **afflicted**.
      But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
      He was bruised for our iniquities;
      The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
      And by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5)
    - It is an affliction of love - an affliction of the gladness of salvation

Verse 2

"He has led me and made me walk
In darkness and not in light." (Lamentations 3:2)

- Jeremiah
    - Jeremiah was literally thrown in dark places throughout his ministry... at one point he is thrown into a dungeon and in the dungeon there is mire and he sinks in the mire... mud! Another several times he is imprisoned in various jails or stocks.
- Me
    - When I am confused and I don't see God's direction in my life... this is a darkness
    - When I feel spiritually dry and far from God's light... this is a darkness
- Christ
    - Where is Christ in this hour? In a tomb; in darkness and not in light. He, being Light of the World, is laid in the darkness of the tomb. And besides that, His soul went to Hades... the place of darkness and the shadow of death.

Verse 3

"Surely He has turned His hand against me
Time and time again throughout the day." (Lamentations 3:3)

- Jeremiah

    - Usually when someone goes through something difficult, they are waiting for it to pass... but with Jeremiah, time and time again throughout the day, problem after problem; hardship after hardship; affliction after affliction; pain after pain.
- Me
    - Sometimes I feel this way
- Christ
    - To the people watching the Crucifixion, they would think that God had turned His hand against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 8

"Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer." (Lamentations 3:8)

- Jeremiah
- Me
    - Sometimes I feel this way - God is silent. He is not answering my prayer... is he even hearing my prayer?
    - Here is a prophet, a man of God, who felt the same way.
- Christ

Verse 14-15

14 I have become the ridicule of all my people—
Their taunting song all the day.
15 He has filled me with bitterness,
He has made me drink wormwood.

- Jeremiah
    - Constantly mocked throughout his life
- Christ was mocked and taunted even on the Cross
    - People said "If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross!" (Matthew 27:40)
    - Chief Priests said "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." (Matthew 27:42)
    - Soldiers offered Him sour wine, mocked Him by hitting Him and telling Him "prophesy... who hit you?"
- Me
    - Am I afraid of being the ridicule of the people, for the sake of the truth?

Hope in God's Mercy (22-39)

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him." (Lamentations 3:22-25)

- Through the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed… what is God's mercy
    - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

    - He did not consume us because of our sin
    - He did not even wait for us to overcome sin before accomplishing salvation
    - But while we were still sinners, He died for us
- His compassions are new every morning
    - Every morning is a new chance for repentance
    - A new opportunity to use our free will to glorify God instead of to betray Him
- The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore I hope in Him
    - Hope!!!

“It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear The yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, Because God has laid it on him; Let him put his mouth in the dust— There may yet be hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, And be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever.” (Lamentations 3:26-31)

- Very Christological

Although we are looking now at Christ buried in the tomb, we have hope. Hope in the Resurrection. Hope that this is not the end.

Call to Repentance (40-42)

But the hope is not just a “feeling” it’s not just something we “say” - but it is a hope based on action… the action of repentance.

“Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the Lord; Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned.” (Lamentations 3:40-42)

- Repentance is a LIFE
- Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord
    - This is not a one time action
    - This is a LIFE of continuous renewal
- Every day examining myself; every day turning back to the Lord; every day lifting my heart and my hands to God

Fruits of Sin (43-54)

“We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned. You have covered Yourself with anger And pursued us; You have slain and not pitied.”

”You have covered Yourself with a cloud,” - I will not be able to see God’s work in my life

- Those who are far from God, are not able to recognize the blessings in their life and the good things that God does in their life
- Even if they recognize good things, they don’t attribute them to God
- Maybe it’s not even on their mind - who is God? He is just someone out there behind a cloud; I can’t see Him, I don’t know Him

- Some people they wake up every morning and they stand before God in prayer… for this person, God is present.
- Some other people, they wake up every morning, and they remember to pray… but they don't… God is present but I am weak.
- For others, they wake up in the morning and God is not on their mind. He is behind a cloud.

"That prayer should not pass through." - My prayers will not be answered

- Imagine someone is praying for blessing in his life, but he loves a sin and doesn't want to repent from it. So why would the Lord bless his life? If the Lord blessed his life, it would have the opposite effect… he would say "The Lord must approve of my lifestyle" if the Lord blessed his life, he would continue to live in his sin
- But when I am far from the Lord, when I am refusing repentance - my prayer will not be answered.

"You have made us an offscouring and refuse In the midst of the peoples. All our enemies Have opened their mouths against us." - Enemies on the earth

- Sin also bears bad fruit on earth - that I can have enemies; I can be accused even here on the earth. Sometimes the Lord will allow us a hardship on earth in order to reorient us to Him

"Fear and a snare have come upon us, Desolation and destruction." - Fear (when someone sins, they have guilt and fear… remember Joseph's brothers)

- Sin bears fear… remember Joseph's brothers. After they sold Joseph, they lived in guilt and fear for the rest of their lives. Whenever something bad would happen they would immediately think "this is because of that sin that we did when we sold our brother"

"My eyes overflow with rivers of water For the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes flow and do not cease, Without interruption," - Tears, sadness, lamenting

- Tears, sadness, lamenting
- There is an epidemic of depression in our society today… why? Because of sin and corruption
- Because I am not attached to the One who gives life; the source of joy and goodness

Comfort for the Believer (55-66)

"I called on Your name, O Lord, From the lowest pit. You have heard my voice: "Do not hide Your ear From my sighing, from my cry for help." You drew near on the day I called on You, And said, "Do not fear!" O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life." (Lamentations 3:55-58)

- But when I find myself bearing the fruit of these sin and in the lowest pit, what shall I do?
- Let me call on the name of the Lord

    - ”I called on Your name, O Lord, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice.”
    - It reminds us of Jonah - who didn’t call on the Lord until he was in the belly of the great fish until he was in Hades!
    - But when He called on the Lord, the Lord answered
- And this also shows us the Christological meaning
    - The Lord now is in the lowest pit. In the belly of the great fish. In the depths of Sheol
    - And He is there to redeem my life
    - But on the third day, He will rise again

Conclusion

Let us take the blessing to hear the Lamentations of Jeremiah and try and meditate on the words we are hearing. Not just to be attracted to the beauty of the tune or the hymn, not just to have an emotional response - but let us have a spiritual response! Let us sing this lamentation as the Jews in exile would sing it, let us sing it with a heart that is yearning for the Lord, and may the Lord soften our hearts to live a life of repentance.

Glory be to God