

2026-06-20: Lamentations Conclusion (AYM Microconvention)

"Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old," (Lamentations 5:21)

Lamentations on Good Friday

- The 12th Hour of Good Friday is focused on the Paradoxes
 - The One who is the Resurrection and the Life... is buried in a tomb
 - The Light of the World... is now in Darkness
 - The Way, the Truth, the Life... Dead
 - The Judge of all... judged and condemned
 - The King of Glory... without a throne
- The Paradox is reflected in the rites and tunes of the hour
 - Tune of [REDACTED]
 - Rites:
 - Switching to the red curtain
 - Group in the sanctuary chanting antiphonally with the ones in the nave
 - 400 [REDACTED] [REDACTED], followed by a procession
 - The reading of Lamentations of Jeremiah
- All of this is a reminder that the Cross and the Suffering of the Cross is not without the glory that comes after
 - "Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." (1 Peter 1:11)
 - The sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow
 - There is no resurrection of the dead, without first having death
 - There is no Glorious Resurrection Feast without Good Friday and the Crucifixion
 - "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." (John 12:26)
 - Whoever follows the Lord Jesus Christ into suffering (The Cross), in the end "My Father will honor."
- Sufferings
 - Struggle against Sin
 - Repentance
 - Fighting passions
 - Breaking bad habits
 - Obtain virtue

- To be holy
- Sufferings of Keeping the Commandment
 - Commandment of Love (enemy, difficult people, those who hurt us)
 - Christian heart is called to love always: love "despite" not love "because of"
 - "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20)
 - Commandment of Modesty
 - Commandment of Purity (of the senses and of the flesh)
 - Commandment of Honesty and Integrity
 - Commandment of Obedience
- Sufferings of Service
 - Washing the feet
 - Humility
 - Sacrificing time, comfort
 - Carrying responsibilities that no one sees (e.g. caring for aging parents, while trying to juggle my own life)
- Intellectual Struggles
 - Questions about God
 - Doubts about the faith
 - "Why did God allow this"
 - "Where is God"
 - "Does God really love me?"
 - The whole book of Lamentations is the cry of a believer trying to understand catastrophe and refusing to let go of God
- Relationship or Social Struggles
 - A friendship that falls apart
 - Conflict within the family
 - Difficult marriage or struggling to find the right person
 - Loneliness
 - Rejection
 - Feeling misunderstood
 - Betrayal
 - Losing someone you love
 - Difficulty in work, finding a job, financial pressure, etc.

Everything is Ruined

- These are real struggles and real sufferings in our lives... and the devil wants me to think "Everything is ruined." Or "it's over."
 - A relationship that falls apart
 - Losing a job, or a set back in my career or education
 - A hidden sin that I told myself I will overcome, but I failed again
 - Failing to grow in a virtue
- On Good Friday, everyone thought it was over...
 - The disciples

- The chief priests
- The Romans
- They were wrong!
- This reminds us of Jeremiah in the beginning of the Lamentations
- Chapter 1
 - How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
How like a widow is she,
Who was great among the nations!
 - 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.
 - All her gates are desolate;
Her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted,
And she *is* in bitterness.
- Chapter 2
 - Same thing
- What is the greatest tragedy in Lamentations? Why is Jeremiah weeping?
 - Burned city? Destroyed Temple? Famine? Captivity?
 - God's people lost communion with God
 - The other stuff is the external manifestation (or symptom) of this underlying tragedy
 - The Temple can be rebuilt. The city can be rebuilt. The economy can recover. But if communion with God is lost, everything is lost.

1. Change Your Perspective

- Halfway through the book, Jeremiah changes his perspective. Nothing changed externally, the city is still destroyed, the people are still in exile - but Jeremiah changed his perspective
- Stop looking at the ruins!
- Jeremiah spent two chapters looking at the broken walls, the empty streets, the suffering, the captivity and then suddenly...
- Chapter 3
 - ²¹ This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
 - ²² *Through* the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
 - ²³ *They are new every morning;*
Great *is* Your faithfulness.
 - ²⁴ "The Lord *is* my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"
- Jeremiah throughout Lamentations, gradually stops describing the city and starts speaking about God

- The turning point is not when the circumstances improve, but they are when my perspective changes
 - Instead of dwelling in my failure or my fear or my regret, I look instead at God's mercy. I look instead at how the Lord uses something evil or something hard, for good
- Instead...
 - Count the blessings and the mercies
 - Look for God in the middle of the story
 - Gratitude... Give thanks to the Lord
- Examples
 - If I am struggling with some questions or doubts...
 - My focus is on "My questions separate me from God" - "I cannot pray or go to liturgy until I have answers."
 - Instead... "My questions can become a path toward knowing God more deeply."
 - If I am struggling in relationships...
 - My focus is on "Look how this person treated me" or "I will never find anyone" or even "God forgot about me"
 - Instead... "What did I learn from this relationship?" or "God's timing is right. He wants the best for me and the best is not here yet."
 - If I am struggling with loneliness...
 - Sometimes my focus is on "No one cares about me..." and "See how this person treated me, and this one didn't invite me, etc." - sometimes I actually miss those who do care about me. And many times, I am isolating myself. L
 - Let me shift my perspective... "The Lord is my portion."
 - I will attend liturgy, go to the Youth Meeting, sign up for conventions. I will stay connected to the Church. I will focus on the even just one faithful friend that I have.
 - If I am struggling in my marriage...
 - Sometimes I focus on "He will never change." or "She will never change." - and actually I miss all of the good qualities in my spouse
 - Instead... Look for the things to appreciate, focus on my own repentance
 - If I am struggling physically...
 - "Why is this happening to me"
 - "How can I encounter God in the middle of this"

2. Turn us back to You, O Lord

- "Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old," (Lamentations 5:21)
- Lamentations ends with Jeremiah's prayer for God to restore us to Himself
 - He isn't praying for a better city
 - He isn't praying for more wealth
 - He isn't praying for the destruction of Babylon
 - He is praying for us to be restored in communion with God
- He puts it in God's hands to turn us back... he doesn't say "We will turn back, O Lord." but rather - we NEED your grace.

- How does God turn us back?
 - Sacrament of Confirmation: The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - He rebukes us, convicts us, comforts us
 - Produces in us the Fruit of the Spirit (Love, Joy, Peace, etc.)
 - Sacrament of Repentance and Confession
 - "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."
(Psalm 51:10)
 - Turning back, like the prodigal son
 - Examining myself
 - Continuous growth
 - Sacrament of the Eucharist
 - Abiding in Christ and He in me
 - Remember COVID? When we couldn't have communion and it was difficult time
 - In the Scripture
 - Hearing God's voice again
 - In Relationship with God
 - Pray the Psalms
 - In Fellowship with the Saints
 - Christian life is not meant to be lived alone

3. And We will be Restored

- What is restoration?
 - Someone might think restoration is...
 - Restored finances
 - Health back to normal
 - Restored relationships
 - Circumstances back to normal
 - Nope.
 - Jeremiah did not get those things... Jeremiah himself did not live to see the full restoration of Jerusalem... no one did. And even the ones who rebuilt it, it did not have the original glory!
- Examples
 - A sinner is turned to repentance
 - A virtue is sown and grows
 - A broken heart finds peace
 - A lost sheep returns to his fold
 - Joy in service
 - Serving Christ rather than needing recognition
 - Doubt leads to greater faith and understanding
 - Reconciliation
 - Patience
 - Someone consumed by fear or anxiety, learns to trust
 - Enslaved to a passion, experiences freedom
 - The lonely one begins to feel the presence of Christ with him

Conclusion

On Friday, everyone thought it was over. The disciples, the chief priests and the Romans thought that's it... He is dead. But God was not finished, because the sufferings of the Cross come before the glories of the Resurrection.

And the Lamentations teaches the same mystery. Jeremiah saw the destruction of his city, after he had even prophesied about it. After he tried to stop it by bringing about repentance. After all of that... and the Temple is destroyed, the city is brought to the ground and the people are taken. And all he can do is Lament.

He starts by looking at the city and its desolation, for 2.5 chapters. Then, halfway through the 3rd chapter, he changes his focus to be on God. And by the end of the 5th chapter, he is singing a song of hope and a song of renewal and restoration.

"Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old," (Lamentations 5:21)

The problem was not the ruins and the city, the problem was the loss of communion with God.

When I face:

- struggling against sin
- struggling to keep the commandment
- struggling in service or in relationships

The temptation is always the same "Everything is ruined." and "It's over."

Take three steps:

1 - Change my perspective (stop looking at the ruins, lift my eyes to God)

2 - Allow the Lord to turn me back to Him (grace of the Sacraments, the Scripture, the Relationship with Him)

3 - Trust that He will restore, and experience His restoration and renewal

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