

We are in week three of a six-week series on the Book of Lamentations. It is really less of a book and more of a highly curated and structured series of poems that were written and rooted in a very specific time and place in the history of Israel. In the wake of God bringing his people out of Egypt in the Book of Exodus, and then through the wilderness for 40 years, and into the promised land of Canaan. God's people had begun to drift in their relationship, worship, and obedience to him. That drift began happening almost immediately when they decided to melt down all of their jewelry into a golden calf, to worship and idolize while in the wilderness. It intensified down the road. In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel approached one of God's prophets named Samuel with a request.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights." 1 Samuel 8:4-9

And so sure enough, in the years that followed, and the parade of generations to come and go, the people of Israel would be led by a series of kings. Some of them were held in high esteem, such as King David and King Solomon, but most of them engaged in what the Bible called "Only evil all the time." In fact, by the time the Bible makes it to just the fourth King in Israel, which is one of Solomon's sons, there is so much dysfunction and infighting that the kingdom is torn into two to become the northern kingdom, which was called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, which was known as Judah.

From there, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had 19 additional kings. All 19 of them were evil in God's eyes. It was over 219 very patient years before God brought the nation of Assyria against them to defeat and scatter them. And while all of that was going on, in parallel, the southern Kingdom of Judah was managing only a little bit better. Unlike the relatives to the North, at least a fraction of their kings were viewed by God as good. The problem for Judah was that while their rate of decline was slower, it was still a decline. They were still a people whose hearts were drifting further and further from God.

As that drift happened, as their eyes and hearts wandered, like a scorned lover, God began to speak up. One of the many examples is found in

the Book of 2 Kings 21, when Manasseh was king over Judah. He just finished putting up this Asherah pole inside the temple of God. The text says,

The Lord said through his servants the prophets: "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab [Northern Kingdom of Israel]. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and give them into the hands of enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their enemies; they have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt until this day." 2 Kings 21:10-15

Now, those are terrifying words to hear spoken over you, and they're definitive. God absolutely means what he's saying, but do you know what happened next? Well, the Book of 2 Chronicles 33 tells us that after a good little scare from Assyria and Babylon, Manasseh actually repented.

In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God. 2 Chronicles 33:12-13

So what it kicked off were these massive rebuilding, renewal, and restoration projects of the temple and the Kingdom of Judah. The Lord relented, and crisis was averted until Manasseh died, because in his wake were more evil kings—Amon, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. And with them came more prophets to warn the people of the trajectory they were on. Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. They didn't listen. They didn't care. These were people who felt invincible. Judges says that everyone did as they saw fit, which was about a different era, but those words are fitting here.

I want to tell you a story. It's a story in one sense about nobody in particular, and in another sense about many people, perhaps some of you in this room. There once was a mother and a father who gave birth to a daughter, and they loved that daughter with all of their heart. They taught her to walk and run. They read her books and taught her to read. They taught her to ride bikes and comforted her when she fell. Year after year, they laid more and more of themselves down. They poured

more and more of themselves out to make sure that their precious little girl had it all.

When she struggled, they got her the best help they could find. And when she succeeded, they celebrated with every ounce of their being. They had one goal: to raise the best daughter they could ever imagine. There was nothing they would not do to love her. There was nothing they would not do to protect her. There was nothing they would not do to help her succeed.

As the years went on, she grew and grew to become this smart, as well as beautiful and beloved, young woman. A woman who found the love of her life, the man of her dreams, and she had so many dreams. Dreams about the perfect husband and the perfect wedding, dreams about the perfect life, with the perfect home, filled with beautiful, joyful kids. Her future was so bright and hopeful. The day came when those parents who loved her so deeply worked up the courage to walk her down the aisle and entrust everything that they had invested, everything that they had stewarded, everything they had hoped, and took her hand, placed it lovingly in his. The journey was no longer theirs to manage or control.

Her life had become one they could only pray over. The rest was up to this beautiful new couple to figure out their new journey together, and what a journey it was. They got the house, the jobs, the kids, and the dog. They even got the picket fence. Everything looked stellar, but behind closed doors, the new ember had started to smolder; the intimacy that once came so easily gave way to cold disinterest. The eyes that had once been only for her were beginning to notice others like her. His heart had become drawn to everything, but what was at home.

Success and accolades stroked an unquenchable ego. The glass of wine at dinner became a bottle of wine every night. The hands that once longed to touch her had evolved to touch whatever and whoever they wanted. In short, there was no limit to the wandering desires of his heart. He had been given the greatest of gifts, the gift of companionship, the gift of becoming one flesh, and in an instant impulse, he was deceived into conquering, having, using, and abusing more and more just like her. And this beloved woman who had given all of herself, the best of herself, had been reduced to nothing more than a knick-knack on a shelf full of souvenirs of his travels.

I just want to ask you, how do you think she might be feeling? Some of you in this room don't have to wonder; I know I painted a rosy picture at the beginning. One that is, in some sense, a fairytale, but Disney and the like have made billions of dollars telling very similar stories of very different endings. The disparity between the stories that they tell and the story I just told is that I believe mine is more likely to sound like some of your stories.

In 1697, William Congreve wrote a play called *The Mourning Bride*. And in it, he coined a famous phrase. I'm sure you've heard it. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." I want to be clear; this is not a male versus female issue. This is an idolatry issue. This is a wandering heart and wandering eye issue. This is a lesser god issue.

Lamentations 2 is the mess around and find out poem. It is the aftermath of a woman scorned told from the perspective of the offender. It is raw; it is dark, and this might be the hardest sermon I've ever preached. Lamentations 2 is the fury of an all-loving God who has been scorned, ignored, and abused for the very last time, and he has wiped Jerusalem like a dish.

Before we get into the text, there is a little bit of insight that I want to draw your attention to. Two weeks ago, we talked about the structure of the Book of Lamentations, specifically that it's a chiasmic poem. The entire book is chiasmic. You don't need to worry too much about what that means, except to say that chapter 1 corresponds to chapter 5, chapter 2 corresponds to chapter 4, and chapter 3 is three times as long and right in the center. In other words, next week's message in chapter 3 is the center or the main idea of this entire collection of poems.

Each of the poems, except for the fifth one, is also an acrostic poem. That is, each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, so 22 verses for the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 2 also adopts this acrostic structure that I mentioned, but it is also chiasmic. So it's a chiasmic within a chiasmic, which just shows the incredible beauty and intentionality of the poetry that's here.

So what that means is that verse one corresponds with verse 22. Verse two with verse 21, verse three with verse 20, and so on. This is important because verses 11 and 12 will form the central pivot point of the book that we will want to pay particular attention to. And so we'll get to that more in just a little bit.

The final thing of note is that the voice throughout this poem will change from third person to first person to second person, and back to third person. That's all very purposeful. So pay attention to those movements in the language here, because they are going to take us through a series of four important stages. Stage one is profane. Stage two is shame. Stage three is cries, and stage four is pain. That's our roadmap.

Profane

Chapter 2 begins the same way as chapter 1 with the word how. Just like Lamentations 1, it's another funeral dirge. The poet says, "*How the Lord has covered Daughter Zion with the cloud of his anger! He has hurled down the splendor of Israel from heaven to earth; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger*" (Lamentations 2:1).

When the temple was built, and the presence of God would descend on them, you may remember that the presence of God was depicted as a cloud that would descend and cover the holy of holies. But now it's not the presence that covers in this poem, it's his anger. His anger has descended in place of his presence. Similarly, the language at the very end of this verse, the last line of it, is a reference to Isaiah 66:1, where God says that heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool.

There's a disparate reality between the throne and the footstool now, between heaven and earth that wasn't there before. A covenant has been broken; one that has been torn in two. You also read a lot of confusing language here about Daughter Zion, Israel, Judah, and Jacob.

These terms are basically the same. They're synonymous terms for the sake of this poem.

Here's a quick summary: Zion is a mountain or a mount inside the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city in the Kingdom of Judah. Judah is now a kingdom of its own but formerly was a tribe of the broader nation of Israel. Israelites were the descendants of the man named Israel, and that man's name used to be Jacob. All of these names effectively mean the same thing. To some, I'm Josh, to some I am son, to some I am dad, and to others, I'm pastor. In every case, I'm still me. This is just poetry being poetry.

"Without pity the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has torn down the strongholds of Daughter Judah. He has brought her kingdom and its princes down to the ground in dishonor" (v. 2). If I bring something down to the ground, I have leveled it. I have left nothing. There's no remnant at all. This is total destruction.

In fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel. He has withdrawn his right hand at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire that consumes everything around it. Like an enemy he has strung his bow; his right hand is ready. Like a foe he has slain all who were pleasing to the eye; he has poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of Daughter Zion. The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for Daughter Judah. He has laid waste his dwelling like a garden; he has destroyed his place of meeting. The Lord has made Zion forget her appointed festivals and her Sabbaths; in his fierce anger he has spurned both king and priest. vv. 3-6

Notice this is not just the kings who had wandering eyes and wandering hearts that God is rejecting. This is the priests as well, and as a result, God moves from the city of Jerusalem language to temple language in verse 7.

The Lord has rejected his altar and abandoned his sanctuary. He has given the walls of her palaces into the hands of the enemy; they have raised a shout in the house of the Lord as on the day of an appointed festival. v. 7

So what's going on here? Well, a nation of false gods, the nation of Babylon, their sworn enemy, has not only invaded the kingdom and brought its destruction, but they have now come into the very temple of God, into the most holy place on earth, the place where the presence of God would dwell, and they raised a shout. It is like a desecration or a profanity of the highest magnitude.

A little example would be when Terrell Owens played for the 49ers and scored a touchdown in the Dallas Cowboys' stadium. He ran to the middle of the star in Dallas and looked to the heavens. That wasn't just a celebration, that wasn't a spike in the end zone, that was personal. He made it personal. He made it profane in that moment. That's a very crude parallel for what's happening here. The enemies have raised a

shout in the temple of God. So now you'll see the language that we saw in 2 Kings earlier.

The Lord determined to tear down the wall around Daughter Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying. He made ramparts and walls lament; together they wasted away. Her gates have sunk into the ground; their bars he has broken and destroyed. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the Lord. vv. 8-9

I want you to picture this scene. It's like in a movie where you might see an adulterous bride, who is sitting across the street, gazing in shock at the place that she once found comfort in. A place that she once called home. But now the groom has not only moved out, but he has bulldozed the home. He has poured gasoline on the rubble. He has lit the match, and he has set it ablaze. The divorce papers are signed. He has changed his number, email, and address. He has blocked her on all of his socials. To say he is not talking to her anymore is an understatement. Things are over. How do you react? What do you do in the face of such devastation? Well, that brings us to stage two.

Shame

The poem depicts the people of Judah at a loss for words; they're speechless. *"The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground" (v. 10).* This is Lenten imagery. This is like Ash Wednesday. We took some ashes and on each person's forehead said, "For from dust you are, and to dust you will return." That is the kind of imagery that is here. The grief is too much. Everything has been uprooted. Everything has been destroyed. Words accomplish nothing in this moment.

Now the voice changes. We move from third person to first person. You'll see the word "my." This is important because verses 11 and 12 also form the center of that chiasm overall in Lamentations 2. What makes it a chiasm in this poem is the consistent use of imagery or language. For example, in verse 1 and in verse 22, they both make mention of the Lord's anger. And in verse 2 and verse 21, they both depict the Lord as being without pity, and so on. So, what do you notice here as we read verses 11 and 12 that might be similar between the two?

My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?" as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their mothers' arms. vv. 11-12

Everyone who has ever had to face their past has had a wake-up call. A moment where you came face-to-face with your mistake, whether that was a drunk driver who got into a wreck, an addict who overdosed, or a cheater who got caught. Sometimes, we are most numb and oblivious to the pain that we have caused and the damage that we have done until

something unexpected reaches out and breaks us. It just shatters us. This is that moment for the poet.

So what is that thing that causes so many tears to well up in their eyes that they can't see what causes their torment from within? Well, the author tells us that it is looking out and seeing innocent children and infants who are wasting away, who are fainting in the streets of Jerusalem. The NIV says their lives ebbed in their mother's arms, but the text is actually more specific than that. Their lives are ebbing away at their mother's breast. That's the wakeup call. That's the broken moment. Nothing is okay.

Many of us in this room lived through the events of September 11, so we might understand what some of this feels like. When you started to look around, you saw not just the material destruction and devastation of an enemy's attack, but the leaping from the buildings and the suffering on the faces of the innocent. When you see those images, it changes you, and they make you question things. Verse 13 begins to ask questions.

"What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, Daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, Virgin Daughter Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?" (v. 13). Christians may be tempted to read that last line and jump way ahead in the story. The poet asks the question rhetorically and honestly. They don't know if there's an answer, and they certainly don't know what the answer is. What they do know is that they were all deceived. They were all lied to.

"The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The prophecies they gave you were false and misleading" (v. 14). Church, when we are living in sin, when we are walking in sin, there will always be a crowd of people willing to tell you exactly what you want to hear. Whether you seek that out on social media, within a group of friends, a spouse, a parent, or even a child, if you want to be affirmed, if you want to find that echo chamber that will agree with you, I guarantee one that exists.

But the question we rarely ask is whether those closest to us will be honest and courageous enough to shine light on that sin, to expose that sin, to reveal that sin. This is true of us individually, and it's also true of us in community and corporately. Sometimes we as a people group sin, whether that's slavery, racism, warfare, faithlessness, or idolatry. Just like with our individual sin, there will always be a community ready to affirm our corporate sin. There will always be a people group telling us that no crime is being committed, but that doesn't make their words true, and it doesn't make their words good or right, even if they claim to be prophets and speak for God. You'll meet an endless number of people who say those kinds of things. It doesn't mean it's true.

Our very own Justin Chao spoke recently at Men's Fraternity. He used the analogy of a person who was dropped into the middle of the ocean, left adrift at sea. He said,

You can swim, but you don't know which way, and everybody has their own opinion. So you talk to a parent, and the parent says, "You're going to want to swim that

way." You talk to a mentor and the mentor says, "You're going to want to swim that way." Then you talk to your spouse, and they say, "Make sure you swim that way." Your best friend says, "Make sure you swim this way over here." So who do you listen to? How do you get to safety in that moment? All of them would be offended if you didn't listen to them. And yet there's actually only one way to dry land. One way to safety. Justin Chao

The people of Judah swam in the wrong direction. They ignored the lifeguard, and they headed for murky waters in the pursuit of something novel, in the pursuit of pleasure and thrill. They never stopped long enough to realize that they already had it all. They were God's chosen people, whom he chose among all the peoples of the earth to be his treasured possession. Now they were enemies, and their critics only stopped to laugh at their shame and embarrassment.

All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at Daughter Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" All your enemies open their mouths wide against you; they scoff and gnash their teeth and say, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day we have waited for; we have lived to see it." The Lord has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago. He has overthrown you without pity, he has let the enemy gloat over you, he has exalted the horn of your foes. vv. 15-17

Those may be difficult words to hear. They may even affirm the most cynical among us who want every reason to believe that if God is there at all, he must be a cruel, vengeful God. After all, this is what he planned, right? Didn't he tell the people of Israel and Judah both what would happen to them if they were not faithful to him? Didn't he tell them way back in the days of Moses and in Deuteronomy 28, how great it would go for them if they were faithful, obeyed, and did all the right things? He told them how poorly it would go for them if they weren't. Absolutely, he did, but don't ever mistake God's honesty with God's cruelty.

God treated his people like his most treasured possession. He never wavered from his faithfulness, but they did. And we do. I do every day. God's people had a choice, and they chose a covenant relationship with God. Then they broke it. Some of us know that pain. Some of us in this room have caused that kind of pain.

Go back to the story of Manasseh. God planned to wipe Jerusalem like a plate in his day, too. But what happened when Manasseh repented in his distress? He sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. When he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea, so he brought him back to Jerusalem, and he brought him back to his kingdom. Manasseh then knew that the Lord was God. Church, God didn't desire destruction.

On the contrary, the psalmist in Psalm 139 reminds us that God fearfully and wonderfully made us. That he knit us in our mothers' womb. God didn't create once and then let everything be. He created us specifically in our mothers' womb. God desired us. He created us in his image, the

way a mother and a father create a child in theirs, to love and protect, and to be together. That was God's ultimate plan. The serpent has been deceiving us to run after lesser gods ever since.

The Cries

So what do we do? Well, that brings us to stage three, the cries.

The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. You walls of Daughter Zion, let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest. Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at every street corner. vv. 18-19

There are two verses in this entire poem that instruct people to do anything, and these are them. There are four imperatives, four commands, if you will, when confronted with such utter destruction. They are let your tears flow like a river, cry out at night, pour out your heart like water, and lift up your hands. Those are the instructions. If you want something to do, there you go.

But I don't think doing something is the point. I can't manufacture tears. I can't will myself to a repentant heart. Verses 18 and 19 don't depict ceremonial or robotic actions. They depict emotions that flow out of real anguish, brokenness, contrition, and real lament. The call is not for the offender to go and muster a tear. It's for the offender to grasp the magnitude of their offense and to care.

The Pain

So as the lament draws to a close, the poet prays a raw, honest prayer, the kind of vulnerable prayer that only God is big enough to receive. It's a prayer for God to see them. To know them, to see their pain, to see their misery, and hopefully, the Lord would consider relenting. This is stage four. This is the pain.

"Look, Lord, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? "Young and old lie together in the dust of the streets; my young men and young women have fallen by the sword. You have slain them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered them without pity. "As you summon to a feast day, so you summoned against me terrors on every side. In the day of the Lord's anger no one escaped or survived; those I cared for and reared my enemy has destroyed." vv. 20-22

That's the end of the poem. It's uncomfortable, isn't it? The question of the poet is, can we be okay with that? Can we sit in the discomfort? Because here's what I experienced in my few short years on Earth, in moments of real pain, sorrow, and conflict, people have a tendency to say some very raw and honest things to one another. In those moments, it is the most honest and vulnerable version of themselves that they can bring into that relationship.

If in those moments I interrupted to ensure that everything they said was unequivocally true, I would be asking the wrong questions because someone in that moment is choosing to truthfully share with me on

how they're feeling. It's a different kind of conversation. The poet is not writing a doctrinal paper, and their words don't necessarily have to be true. They're designed to be felt. All of Lamentations is just that. It does not aspire to be a text rooted in the mechanisms of God's justice. Instead, it is an honest expression of grief from the wrongdoer to the wronged. That is its purpose.

It models for us a way of relating to God that most of us have either never experienced or are deeply, deeply uncomfortable with. Here's the beauty of it: God is a big enough God to let us do it. But this rawness is often foreign to us, like a difficult math problem in school. For those of you who grew up with textbooks, we've grown accustomed to flipping to the back of the book immediately to find the answers. The answer is Jesus, we say, and we're absolutely right. It is. But many of us have never stopped long enough to understand why.

What is the gospel? Well, it's good news, you might say. And again, you'd be correct, but stop long enough to consider why they needed some good news so badly. Lamentations 2 is why, and that makes the words of the prophet Isaiah that much more meaningful. Words written hundreds of years before that night in Bethlehem, the prophet Isaiah wrote this.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. Isaiah 52:7-9

Make no mistake, Jesus is the good news. God did have a plan, but it wasn't their destruction. As the poet said, it was their salvation; it was our salvation, because the very next chapter is Isaiah 53.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5-6

The "him" is Jesus. That is true. As Christians, we put our roots in what is true, but don't miss the importance of real lament. Walter Brueggemann said,

Christians have never much used and never much needed the Book of Lamentations. Never needed and never used, because Christians have forever been triumphant and dominant, partly confident that Jesus is the winner, and partly privileged culturally, politically, and economically. As a result, our losses were never so deep ... no one did a "Final Solution" on us as on the Jews. We never used and never needed Lamentations, until we considered the cross and the crucifixion and the suffering love of Jesus and his call to enter the places of hurt with him. Walter Brueggemann

Can we enter those places of hurt with him? About 20 years ago, I heard a song on Pandora that, melodically, was unlike anything I'd ever listened to. There was a rawness to this song that captured my attention. I happened to be in a class on the Psalms at the time, and so I was just getting the language of the lament Psalms for the very first time.

The song beckoned my heart with three words that I'd only ever known used as a profane phrase. The song told a story about all the different kinds of people that you can imagine, all the different camps of people who utter this phrase daily, each meaning something a little different when they say it. Most commonly, we say it in vain; most honestly, we say it in pain. Three words—oh my God.

They can be words that profane. They can be words of our shame. They can be words of our cries. They can be prayers of our pain. And Lamentations 2 is a journey through all of them. I would argue they are words that we need to reclaim. So, if there's one thing I want you to remember, one way for lament to become sticky and useful and healing in your life individually and in our lives corporately, it's this: don't say it in vain. Pray it in pain. Oh my God.

I want to invite you to take the next few minutes to reflect on the words of this song. They were the cries of the songwriter. Perhaps they mirror some of our own feelings. In your heart, lift your tears, lift your lament to God. The songwriter writes this,

Oh My God By Jars Of Clay

Oh my God, look around this place. Your fingers reach around the bowl And set the break and set the tone
Flights of grace, future falls Present pain, all for whose sake?
Oh my God, Oh my God, why are we so afraid?
Make it worse when we don't bleed. There is no cure for our disease.
Turn a phrase and rise again. Fake your death and only tell your closest friends. Oh my God.

Oh my God, can I complain? Take away my firm belief
And graft my soul upon your grief Weddings, bows and alibis
All drift away when a mother cries Liars and fools, sons and failures
Thieves will always say Lost and found, ailing wonders
Healers always say Whores and angels, men with problems
Believers always say Broken-hearted, separated Orphans always say
War creators, racial haters Preachers always say Distant fathers, fallen warriors
Givers always say Pilgrim saints, lonely widows Users always say
Fearful mothers, watchful doubters Saviors always say

Sometimes I cannot forgive These days mercy cuts so deep
If the world was how it should be Maybe I could get some sleep
While I lay I dream we're better Scales were gone and faces lighter
When we wake we hate our brother We still move to hurt each other
Sometimes I can close my eyes All the fear that keeps me silent
Falls below my heavy breathing What makes me so badly

bent? We all have a chance to murder. We all feel the need for wonder. We still want to be reminded that the pain is worth the plunder. Sometimes, when I lose my grip, I wonder what to make of heaven.

All the times I thought to reach it All the times I had to give up
Babies underneath their beds Hospitals that cannot treat
All the wounds that money causes All the comforts of cathedrals
All the cries of thirsty children This is our inheritance
All the winter watching mothers This is our greatest offense
Oh my God Oh my God Oh my God Oh my God (Jars Of Clay)

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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