

Praying the News**Session 3 Audio Script: A Space for Lament | Janice MacLean**

I want to begin today by sharing a poem-prayer with you. It's written by Elizabeth Cunningham from her book *Small Bird*. It's called "Heart Prayer."

POEM IS QUOTED

We've lost the language, and the daring, of lament. We have stepped outside a culture of lament. It's hard to keep our heart open when we are constantly surrounded by news that can break our heart. There are times that Help, Thanks & Wow simply aren't enough. If we are truly going to pray the news, then we need the practice of lament.

Perhaps our best resource for making space for lament is found in the Psalms. They teach us much about lament.

The Psalms are full of lament. Some are subtle complaints. Some curse the enemy. Some curse God. Most turn and find hope. Some don't. In a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages, seven are named "Penitential Psalms" and are read in times of life's greatest struggle.

Many believe the Lament Psalms belong to the voice of those who have lost faith. This is not true. It is the faithful who have courage to cry out. It is the faithful who have the audacity to bring before God all of life, not just the sanitized version. It is the faithful who make their point with overstatement and exaggeration in order to convey full feeling. It is the faithful who bring the broken shards and name and confess what is destroying life. It is the faithful who question God when besieged by ambiguity and bewilderment. It is the faithful who turn the force of prayer to the God-of-their-understanding and dare to protest.

The lamenters are faithful enough to lament and their lament is the thread that holds them in relationship. It is lament that keeps compassion alive.

We need to practice lament in our times of disorientation when all is not right. The laments are for those times when we are struck by the betrayal of core values that result in injustice. Lament is for those times when we are horrified by hate, or overwhelmed with human violence. Lament is being able to have a truthful conversation in our own heart and soul when times are difficult. We shape laments that cry for justice, peace and compassion.

Perhaps, after listening to the news, all we can do is read the Psalms. They are more than an emotional torrent of words. Laments are not just venting for the sake of venting. Glenn Pemberton writes: "Lament is a structured, controlled language that by its methodical cadence helps restore a modicum of structure in times of disorientation."

We pray the Psalms or perhaps we write our own laments.

Perhaps all we can do after listening to the news, is pause and allow our head to fall into our hearts and breathe our compassion on a situation. Just acknowledging it; giving it our breath.

Or we sit there, just make space and pray what's in our heart - "pray the tearing...pray the torrent, pray the rage, the murder and the mourning."

If we are going to pray the news, we need to recover Lament. We need to pray the wholeness of our heart and make space for life as it actually is, and not as we pretend.

We need bold communal lament in our worship and the life of our faith community, where we hold one another.

To be engaged with all the lens of listening, and sustain a practice of praying the news, we need to reach deep, make space, and sound our own voice of lament.