

By Fred Pratt Green:
The Church of Christ in Every Age,
Beset by change, yet Spirit Led,
Must claim and test its heritage,
And keep on rising from the Dead.

Listening: Liminality, Lament, Remembering, Dreaming...

Conversation: not discussion, debate, (positions, conclusions, persuading others)
listening behind the positions, to what people need, what people experience and hope,

Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible. Psalm 74, a communal lament, never appears in our Sunday readings because it is too daring, too bold, maybe too honest! We may feel uncomfortable with its blunt language.

But I have been thinking about this psalm as I look at what is happening these days, because it was written when the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians, homes were gone, farms ruined, people scattered and displaced, cultural symbols desecrated, leaders dragged into Exile. People are in shock and grief. This psalm is the community crying out to God in distress. It is an example for us of how to talk to God as we face the destruction that has happened in Lytton and Lytton First Nation, as we are caught in this time of climate chaos with all the wildfires, drought, smoke; this time of dislocation, this time of the grief of finding more unmarked graves and facing another layer of the trauma caused by Residential schools.

The wisdom of the Bible is that in trauma we need to lament. Western individualistic culture will encourage us to “move on”, to forget the past and concentrate on the future. But that is not what happens in Biblical lament. Lament is truth-telling about how bad it really is; this truth-telling is necessary for real healing to happen. Truth-telling is necessary for true reconciliation. Truth-telling must happen for restoration.

The whole psalm is addressed to God, directly. Lament is the language of relationship.

Lament is claiming our voice before God. Telling God all that is not the way it should be. Telling God how bad it is. Lament cries out to God about the pain. The freedom from slavery in book of Exodus begins because God heard “the Cry of the People.”(Exodus 3)

Lament trusts that God hears.

Lament frees us to hope.

Language of lament is loud, fierce, directed at God, calling God to be God, to live up to God's name, God's reputation as the One who listens. Lament calls God to defend what belongs to God. Lament demands action from God. (Remember Tevye in the movie "Fiddler on the Roof", shaking his fist at God)

We are brought up not to complain, told not to complain, to keep quiet. We Anglicans are taught to be polite! But lament, this language of prayer from the Bible, is honest and loud, tell it like it is.

Two thirds of the Psalms, the prayers of the Bible, are lament psalms. These are not only individual personal lament prayers but often worshippers together, corporate prayer. Communal lament.

Directly addressed to God. Lament assumes a close relationship with God. Like human relations, we can be polite with people we don't know, but we tell the most painful truths to our closest friends and intimate partners, where we feel safe to lament, to be honest, to cry, to rail, to weep, to express our deepest longings.

Remembering:

Gathering to ourselves the inner resources – resilience, our experience before that in community we can rise again.

Remembering the wider community, the world and the church remember you; you are not alone. (There have been notes of support and donations from across the Territory, the country, the world)

I have been praying that the world recognizes the horror of this time of heat and wildfires and smoke, that this disaster might stimulate change. Lament helps us stay in touch with the reality of how bad it is; Lament keeps us from denial. Denial immobilizes, stops hope; denial keeps us numb; it leads to despair. Lament works against numbness. Lament frees us from despair.

Crying out to God is an act of bold Faith, trust that God can restore the community. Lament comes out of a conviction "that God is sovereign over the present situation and can work good out of it" (Brueggemann Psalms in the Life of Faith, p. 77) We cry out because we have confidence God is present with us, in "the darkness and displacement" We are not alone. God is with us.

In 2007 when I put the word "liminal" in the title of my thesis, I had to explain the word to my thesis advisor. Now because of Covid, everyone has heard it, maybe even overused, "liminal", in-between time, threshold moment moving into new time, time of uncertainty. But like Exodus wandering, God is near; it is a thin place where our world and God's world intersect. There is only a thin veil between Earth and Heaven.

Uncertainty is often where we are most aware we are in the realm of God's Spirit.
Liminal time is part of readiness and openness to God's new future.

Hearing each other

That is where we are in the Church, liminal space, a time of radical change, when
what we knew before, we cannot go back to.

Bold, Courage, Fear Not, The Lord your God goes with you wherever you Go.

Hearing each other in Lament, Remembering, Hopes, preparing us to move into the
new thing the Holy Spirit is working toward.

Our Hope is in our Creator, the Love at the heart of the universe. The God of Jesus,
the God of the cross and resurrection, who brings life out of death, that is where our
hope lies.

Thanks be to God.

Mission - The Five Marks of Mission

The Mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
To respond to human need by loving service
To seek to transform unjust structures of society
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and
sustain and renew the life of the earth

*These come originally from the worldwide Anglican Consultative Council, and
have been affirmed by Lambeth, our Diocese of New Westminster in our Plan
2018, and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.*

**God, you have called your people to ventures
Of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
Through changes unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
Not knowing where we go,
But only that your hand is leading us
And your love supporting us;
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.
(ELCIC)**