

## **Identity Crisis: Faithfulness (Palm Sunday)**

**April 2, 2023**

### **Introduction**

God's character throughout time has proven Him to be true, reliable, and willing to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Rather than coming up with our own solutions apart from God, we can trust God to provide a way forward.

### **God is Faithful**

Until we recognize that we were created in the image of God, we will suffer from an identity crisis. As we learn about the characteristics of God, we can begin to understand who we were created to be. In Exodus, God reveals to Moses who He is: "Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6-7). God's character throughout time has proven Him to be true, reliable, and willing to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Rather than coming up with our own solutions apart from God, we can trust God to provide a way forward.

### **Songs of Lament**

One of the most popular scriptures about Faithfulness can be found in Lamentations. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him'" (Lamentations 3:22-24). This sounds really good and hopeful, and many people have quoted this and made songs and poems out of this scripture. You

hear it in people's prayers, and by all accounts, it is a great verse. However, if you are to look at the entire book of Lamentations you would find language that contrasts what you just heard. For example, just before the scripture we just read that is full of hope and faith, we read: "He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, 'My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord'" (Lamentations 3:16-18).

To lament means to show a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. It is a prayer expressing sorrow, pain, or confusion and should serve as the main way that Christians process grief in God's presence. It may seem like an expression of doubt but in essence, it is a struggle to grapple with how pain and faith work together. God is not opposed to our questioning or lament. In fact, all throughout scripture people have used cries of Lament to cope and deal with and process their emotions. In our world today we are told to just believe and hope that God is good and that he will come through, and we neglect to go through the mourning process and deal with our emotions toward God.

### **The End of Exile**

The book of Zechariah was written near the end of the 70 years of Exile. The people were asking the prophet Zechariah if it was almost time for the Kingdom of God to come (Zechariah 7:1-3). Should they continue to Lament and mourn the destruction caused by the Babylonians? However, he reverses the question on them and asks if they will become the kind of people that are ready to participate in God's Kingdom (Zechariah 7:4-7).

The question goes unanswered but the Spirit of God tells Zechariah what kind of people they need to be to participate in God's Kingdom: "Administer true justice; show mercy and

compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other” (Zechariah 7:8-10). God is waiting for them to show Him they are ready to be faithful to Him. Yet, God renews His promise to the Family of Abraham once again (Zechariah 8:1-8).

### **The Messianic King Prophesized**

Through a prophetic vision, the coming of the Messianic King is announced (Zechariah 9:9-13). He will ride into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey and will bring peace to the nations. In Lamentations, Israel is lamenting the fact that God has allowed Babaloyyn to overtake their land promised to them and to rule over them. For 70 years they are in Exile. When they return is when the book of Zachariah was written asking if they should still Lament the Exile, but then God makes them a new promise. Then the Israelites have to hold on to this promise for 500 years! But then one day. A son is born! He grows up and becomes a great teacher and prophet. He performs signs and miracles and much of Israel is hopeful that this might be the fulfillment of God’s Promise long ago.

This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (John 12:12-16). People greeted him and honored him by waiving the palm branches as he entered the city. God does not fail on his promises because He is always Faithful!

### **He is still Faithful**

God is not scared of our cries of Lament. He isn’t afraid of our questions, and it is okay for us to cry out to him and process our emotions. God, I don’t understand, God why didn’t you, God I don’t think I can! Through the scripture time and time again humanity has questioned

God's Faithfulness, and yet he has remained faithful to us. It may not be in our timing, and it may not make sense to us at first, but nothing is too big for God. And when we are done Lamenting and crying out to him we can say: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him'" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

### **Further Study:**

- Bible Project Video: Faithful - [https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/faithful/?utm\\_source=web\\_social\\_share&medium=shared\\_video](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/faithful/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video)
- Bible Project Video: Lamentations - [https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/lamentations/?utm\\_source=web\\_social\\_share&medium=shared\\_video](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/lamentations/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video)

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What do you think it looks like to trust God when all seems lost?
- How does Jesus embody and fulfill the ancient promises of God?
- What in your life do you need to surrender to God and trust Him with?