

Lamenting Well

An Integrative Self-Study Project

Written by Philip Adams for MCC Richmond
Holy Week 2021

Palm Sunday – March 28, 2021

Welcome! It is my prayer as you move through these exercises that you will consider the sorrow and grief related to the impact of COVID-19 upon your life in these last months. It is my sincere belief that the Church must assist individuals in making the transition through grief to a new sense of hope that is born from lamenting well. A lament is “a passionate expression of grief or sorrow” (Oxford Dictionary). If we can lament well, then, perhaps we can move through grief and come out on the other side, moving closer to God in dealing with the losses in our lives and creating a place for hope. It is in this place of hope that faith lives.

God bless you as you move through this self-study. May the meaning of Holy Week be positively supplemented by this effort in your life.



Lamenting Well

Study the image to the left. What do you see? What conclusions can you draw from your review? Write your impressions in this area.

Prayer of Commencement (speak aloud)

Eternal God, I seek your Spirit in considering this painful year. I ask for a revelation of your purpose for my life in moving through this season of sorrow, loss and grief. I claim your presence as I lament, relying on your Spirit, to move through this season to a stronger foundation of hope. Help me to grow in healthy ways. Thank you, God. Amen.

Monday, March 29, 2021 – Rainy Days and Mondays

Too often we think that Mondays are difficult because we must start the week over with its demands for work and getting back in the grind after a weekend off. This week, I challenge you to embrace Monday; to consider the grief of Monday and to use that grief for God’s glory. There is a very specific task that I am asking you to complete today and for that task, you need to be able to clear your mind to perceive God’s intervention.

We will focus on loss today. Stop what you are doing and close your eyes. Consider loss in your life over the last year. Don’t choose hastily, but sit expectantly and ask God to point out to you five great losses of this past year. As the thoughts solidify in your mind, write them down here.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Prayer of Courageous Expectation (speak aloud)

Sustaining God, I will hold onto these losses today. I will not pray for healing. I will not pray for their removal. I will not pray for resolution. I will hold them in my heart as a mother holds a child. They have impacted my life over this last year and they are a part of me. To discard them would be another loss. I hold them and I wait for the Spirit. I wait to discern the value of these losses. Thank you, God. Amen.

As you move about your life in these next twenty-four hours, consider holding the losses close to your heart. Think about your list of five losses and consider them for the part they have played in your life. Consider a process that just allows you to absorb the impact of each loss. I encourage you not to make any judgments or place blame. Just hold them in your heart and mind, keeping vigil over the Spirit’s intervention in your life with these matters.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021 – Tuning into the Inner Soul

While we continue to hold the five losses that we have listed in our heart, we want to begin to bathe them in spiritual creativity. Consider the universal nature of music. Every culture lifts its voice to the universe to express a rhythm and the beat of life within ([7 Reasons Why Music Is Important To World Cultures - MTT - Music Think Tank](#)).

Read the 3 questions below. Connect to this hyperlink.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_RjllPuqyc&feature=youtu.be

How does this music impact your sense of loss?

What feelings are raised when you listen with your eyes closed for more than one minute?

How do you feel at the end of the selection?

Prayer of Inner Attentiveness (speak aloud)

Creator God, who made all things, thank you for the gift of music. Thank you for the shared experience of creation when humankind, in your image, also creates good and beautiful things. Grant us a refrain of grace to carry in our hearts and minds as we contemplate this year of loss. Allow this music to fill the spaces between our grief and our process of lamenting well. Thank you, God. Amen.

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – Considering the Sayings of Others about Loss

Today we will consider the spoken word of those who have dealt with loss and grief. Speak these quotes aloud.

“There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still.” Corrie ten Boom

"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world—the company of those who have known suffering." Helen Keller

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

"I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process." C.S. Lewis

(above quotes from [20 Grief, Loss, and Mourning Quotations \(verywellhealth.com\)](#))

"Grieving doesn't make you imperfect. It makes you human." — Sarah Dessen

“TEARS ARE A RIVER THAT TAKES YOU SOMEWHERE...TEARS LIFT YOUR BOAT OFF THE ROCKS, OFF DRY GROUND, CARRYING IT DOWNRIVER TO SOMEPLACE BETTER.” — CLARISSA PINKOLA ESTES

"My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love." Unknown

"When it is darkest, we can see the stars." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."
— A.A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh

(above quotes from [65+ Best Grief Quotes To Help Someone Cope With Loss \(YourTango\)](#))

Soaking Prayer (speak aloud three times)

God of life who created the sound of others' voices, we thank you for words of comfort. Allow these words to take up residence in our heart next to the losses we hold there. May this space be filled with the precious presence of your Spirit. Thank you, God. Amen.

Thursday, April 1, 2021 – Maundy Thursday – Consider the Visual Impacts of Loss
Contemplate these images. Hold them in your heart.



CONSIDER VERSES FROM THE “SADDEST PSALM” - PSALM 88: 1-3, 9

LORD, God of my salvation, by day I cry out, even at night, before you—
let my prayer reach you! Turn your ear to my outcry because my whole being is filled with
distress; my life is at the very brink of hell.

My eyes are tired of looking at my suffering. I’ve been calling out to you every day, LORD—
I’ve had my hands outstretched to you!

Prayer of Loss (speak aloud)

Loving God, I am beginning to see the power of shared loss. It can bind us together. It can
remind us of our shared humanity. It can speak to us of love and life. Allow these images to
take up residence in my heart next to the losses I hold there. Cover these images with your Holy
Spirit. Thank you, God. Amen.

Friday, April 2, 2021 – What’s Good About It?

Today is Good Friday - the day of Jesus’ crucifixion and death. It is a paradox that one of the darkest days in history is referred to as good. Good because Resurrection Sunday is coming; good because God’s illustration of the Passover Lamb is being revealed; good because suffering becomes life; suffering becomes glory. What aspects of your suffering will become glory?

Think about the good in the past year. Stop what you are doing and close your eyes. Consider the good in your life over the last year. Don’t choose hastily, but sit expectantly and ask God to point out to you five great goods of this past year. As the thoughts solidify in your mind, write them down here.



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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

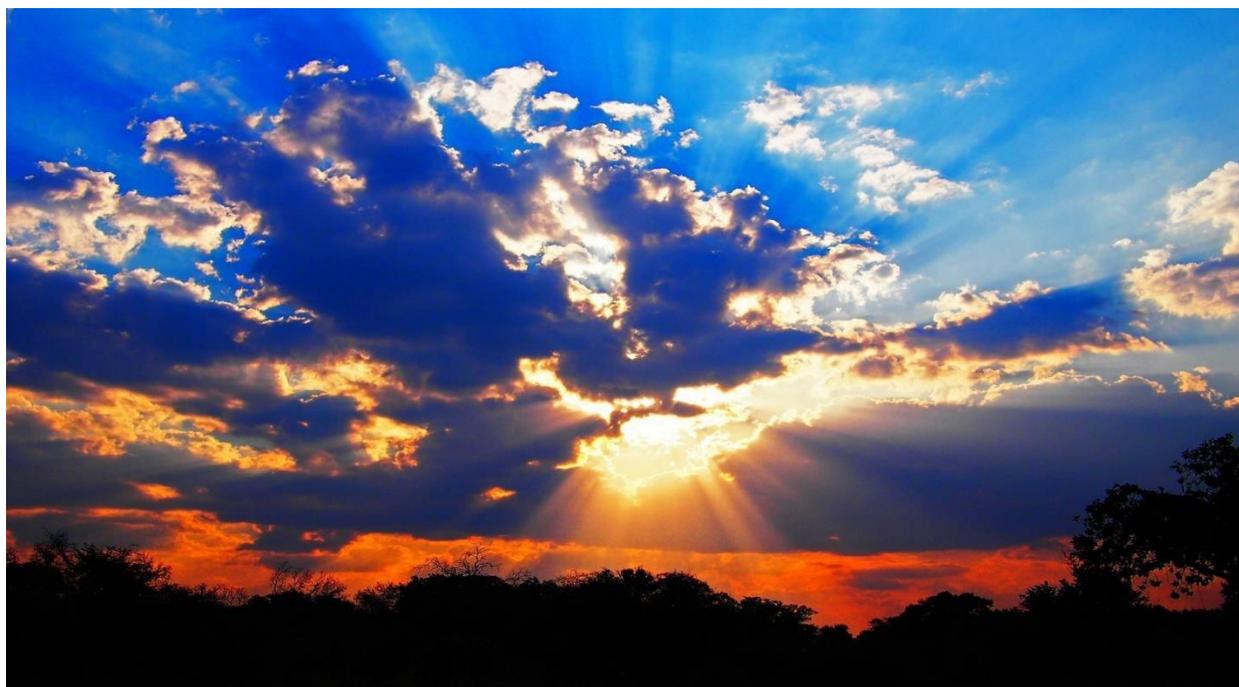
Prayer of Acknowledgement (speak aloud)

Enduring God, these good things show that you are still at work in times of suffering. There are good things to think about, talk about, and celebrate. The suffering has been surrounded by good. Open my eyes to see more of this good. Open my eyes to see and to know that you desire the best for me and within the losses, there are also great gifts. Keep these good gifts before me. Let them permeate my thoughts and let them soften the rough edges of loss. They are good gifts, God--my good gifts. Thank you. Amen.

Saturday, April 3, 2021 – A Liminal Day

This is the day between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. It is a day in between – a liminal day. Liminal refers to transition – being in a middle season and headed to another season, experiencing an intermediate phase; having not yet arrived at a destination but in transit. Much of life is liminal. Can you find peace in an in-between time? Think about what is in process in your life now – what is yet to be but has not yet come. Sit back and close your eyes. Allow God to hold you in this liminal time.

Rehearse your five losses and your five good things in your mind. Like the sun through the clouds, is there a relationship between the two? Are the losses and good things related somehow? Write down three descriptive words that come to mind here.



Prayer of Not Yet (speak aloud)

Suffering God, we are between suffering and glory. We are between life and death. We are between sorrow and joy. We are between solitude and company. We are between failure and success. We are between pain and euphoria. We are between confusion and comprehension. We are between hatred and love. We are between war and peace. We are between illness and health. We are between. Stay with us, God. Be in between all of these transitional liminal spaces with us. Thank you, God. Amen.

Sunday, April 4, 2021 – Resurrection Sunday Loss and Good Together

Our last day of this exercise brings celebration – the Risen Christ! A day of new life and new beginnings, shadowed by loss and grief, but anchored in God’s greatest gift of good. Hope! Perseverance! Understanding! Acceptance! How does lamenting well feel today? Do you feel that you have discovered some ties to your lamenting that will offer sustaining power for the future? Consider this week and think of loss and good together.

Connect to this hyperlink: <https://youtu.be/8m8qD-65M2A>

Name one thing you have learned this week about lamenting well.

What work remains in your life to allow you to lament well?

What does it mean to you to lament well?

Consider Mary Magdalene in the garden early on Resurrection morning as told in John 20. She did not recognize Jesus until he spoke her name. Remember that God knows you by name. God is speaking your name today. God knows your pain and sorrow and God also knows the good things of your life. God has a distinct interest in who you are and how you get along in this world.

Prayer of Conclusion (speak aloud)

Creator God, who made all things, thank you for the gift of reflection. Thank you for this time to consider our losses and our gifts. Thank you for the gift of Jesus as the hope of the world. Thank you for the coming of your Kingdom and the gift of grace to see all as your children. Thank you, God for loving me just the way I am and for instilling within me the ability to see the good along with the losses. I reach out my hands to you, God, knowing that you are there. I release the losses to you, God for you alone know what to do with them. I hold the good things close to my heart and pray for their continued growth and multiplication. Grow the good in me. Grow the good all over this world. Grow the good. Amen.