

**Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church**

**Sun, Aug 26, 2018**

**Has God Forgotten Us? – Lament/Grieving  
(Psalm 13)**



**But I trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.  
(Ps 13:5-6)**

**A lesson from the psalm**

More times than I would like to admit that my soul is agonized with anxiety – sleepless nights and sluggish days – forlorn and forsaken – forgotten by everyone – crushed by a sense of abandonment to the worst that can happen – for me, it's often values that I hold dear being violated, especially to the detriment of communities I care for deeply – or the health of dear friends – or troubling patterns and events in our family – the agony shrouds my soul, darkens my view, cuts me off from everyone – I feel unheard and abandoned – that's the range of memories my reflections on this psalm took me to this week – but the psalm did not leave me there – rather, it took me to a place of letting go of these agonies by giving them over to a steadfast friend whose love is the source of life in all of its bounty – let go of my defining attachments to these traumas and refocus on praise of and participation in the Commonwealth God is creating, the Commonwealth to which God invites my contribution – that, for me this week, is the leading lesson from this psalm

**Provocative points to ponder**

- The form/structure of the psalms of lament (45% of the psalms are laments) is fairly simple and straightforward – 'plea and praise' is the simplest description I've found – 'address + complaint + request + expression of trust' is a fuller description that rings true – Rick Reynolds has me reading James Kugle's wonderful survey of the Old Testament, *How to Read the Bible* (2007) – his description of the Bible's 'book of the soul' is worth noting – "... the human being turns directly to God, expressing his or her deepest thoughts and fears, asking for help or forgiveness, offering thanks for help already given." (459)
- I think it's crucial to remember, especially in this most secular of cities in Canada, that there is a whole worldview in those simple descriptions of form and flow = this world is a bountiful gift from a loving God that requires your active contribution to flourish and that God enables you to engage in that mission by freeing you from your sense of abandonment – draws you out of your frightened isolated self and assures you of the support of a courageous community – in this work together, soul to soul, connected for compassion in community with God – who is, in God's very essence, a community
- Stacey Gleddiesmith, who teaches worship at Regent College at UBC and works with a new church plant there, returned to Canada from two years in Somalia and sank into a deep depression – no job, close friend's suicide, living in a dark, dank basement,

struggling with the horrors she has endured in the Somalian war zones – but the Spirit was gently healing her through reading the psalms – gently guiding her to see that she was not alone, without hope, desperate to escape this life – brought her back into community to contribute to the Commonwealth of God

### **Finding this in God's living Word, Jesus Christ**

- For those of us who identify as Christians, as friends and followers of Jesus, this God's Christ in whom the final act of the world's reconciliation began, the lament form is seen most clearly on the cross – the words Jesus cries out are from Ps 22 – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” – so, this sense of being forgotten and abandoned is a trigger point in the human soul – we all experience it – but how do we respond to it? – that's the crucial question, especially in a secular culture that offers all sorts of superficial ways of numbing or ignoring it – as for us, we take it to our Creator, who we know is love because of what we have seen and felt and come to know in Jesus, all through the healing influence of the Holy Spirit – and when we make that choice, tentative as it may be in the beginning, then we find that we are not alone, but are supported and encouraged by the intimate energy of God's love to carry on into the Commonwealth in a diverse and delightful company of that God's friends

### **Your Notes**

**Prayers for Help** –for those of us who have been on long journeys, arriving in new lands, adjusting to strange ways, grant us calm, curiosity, and appreciation – for those who have undergone surgeries, grant us comfort and healing – for those of us who are agonized with anxieties, offer us assurances of your presence and providence – for those continuing to face the devastation of disasters in a world of dramatically changing conditions, grant us courage and insight to change things for the better (silence to consider this)

**Prayers of Thanks** –for your presence and providence, whether we recognize it or not – for the opportunities to create for us to witness to that reality, whether people respond immediately or not – for the healing energy of your Spirit working within us and among us, bringing about the reconciliation your offer to the world in Jesus Christ, whether people participate consciously in it or not (silence to consider this)

**Prayers of Wow** – amazement at the surprising ways to break through our sense of being forgotten to assure us of your steadfast love and care (silence to consider this)

*The form and flow of thanks, help, and awe is taken from Anne Lamott's wonderful little book on prayer, Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).*