



SERMON RECAP

NOVEMBER 2, 2025

Lament Psalms: Hear my cry

Series: Spirituality for Justice

Scripture: Psalm 5

I googled “Most frustrating word in the English language,” and was given a few interesting choices. The first three suggestions were the words whatever, literally, and moist. I get all three. Whatever is often said with dismissive disdain. Literally has been used incorrectly so much that it has literally changed meaning in common usage. Moist is one of those words that some people just can’t stand hearing.

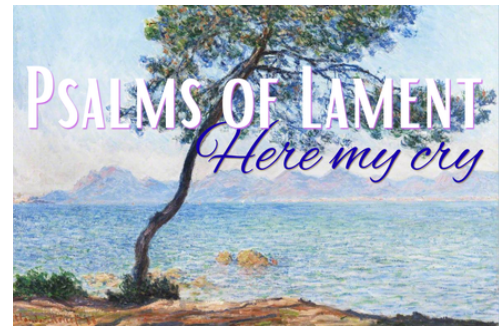
I propose however, that none of these are as universally frustrating as SOON (next week I’ll talk about the most frustrating phrase, “calm down”). Soon is so frustrating because of its ambiguity. What does soon mean? When will soon happen? When will get there? When will Joe show up? When will traffic lighten? These are answers that we want to know definitively, and yet soon keeps rearing its ugly head.

We ask “how long?” The Psalms ask God “how long?” 15 times. “How long will you forget me, LORD?” (13:1) “How long will I be attacked?” (62:3) “How long will the wicked triumph?” (94:3). We get the frustrating answer in Psalm 37:

*“Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
for like the grass they will **soon** wither,
like green plants they will **soon** die away.” (NIV)*

Soon is a word of lament because waiting is so hard. We are not a people who enjoy waiting. We fill every moment of our lives with sounds, distractions, scrolling, music, and more. We do not like to wait, so we cry out “How long?” In Psalm 5, that exact question is not asked. Instead, the frustration of all the “soons” boils over and the psalmist skips the pleasantries and cries out “Hear my words! Consider my groans! Pay attention!”

These are cries of someone who is sick of soon. They are cries of someone who is tired of being dismissed. They are the cries of deep faith and conviction that the world is not how it is meant to be. They are the cries of someone who is tired of God’s will not being done on earth as it is heaven. Cries of lamentation are deep, meaningful cries of faith, and this is



something many have forgotten. Lamentation is an important part of faith, and it is an important part of worship. Worship cannot only be praise because life is not only good news.

Yes, we can always find room for thanks and praise. Even if it is, as I often say in our times of prayer, “just for this breath.” We have a gift of life that is always worth celebrating, but to ignore the pain and suffering is to ignore real life.

We know that God is a God of justice, but we look around and see injustice. We know that God is a God of steadfast love, but we look around and see people not loving. Suffering happens when our expectations of the way the world should be do not align with our felt experience. Suffering only happens when we expect something better, and God is at the heart of why we expect something better.

For the Psalmist, the cause of suffering is “the enemies.” Sometimes the term enemies can throw us off. It can distance us from the Psalms because most of us don’t have enemies. The word conjures images international intrigue or courtly back stabbing, “Game of Thrones” kind of stuff. Enemies are anything that cause suffering -- that create distance between our experience and our expectations.

The enemy of the Psalms can be a cancer diagnosis, depression or anxiety, a drunk driver who causes injuries, an unhelpful coworker or boss, dementia slowly taking away a loved one, or just the heavy weight of grief. These are enemies that we all fight, and when the enemies cause suffering, it is only human to lament.

Expressing lament is an act of faith. Expressing lament together is an act of community. How long will we suffer? The question is as frustrating as How long until we get there? But underlying it all is the faith that we will get there. The suffering will end. God’s will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.