

Lamentations is a book of poems – five to be exact –
powerful words surrounding unspeakable suffering.

The five poems emerge from a deep wound, a pool of pain; the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., – when the Israelites were captured -- forced into exile. **God seemed hidden to them.**

I would prefer not to go here but this scripture comes from our daily lectionary – and so we go here because we carry our own wounds and the woundedness of the world – we go here because it is in our communal, as well as our personal pain, where we find expression, and ultimately, we go here to find **healing.**

There are many voices within these 5 poems – we will only look at a portion of the 3rd poem. Here are VPC we have many and diverse voices – many and diverse viewpoints – many and diverse interpretations of the events we have lived through. They overlap one another– they contradict one another – each voice wants to be heard and all are interwoven to make up our church's faith story.

We need not let the many and diverse voices distract us away from the pain and grief we feel. It is very real. Many of you are

from generations that did not talk about grief. Better to keep silent and move on. But grief appears, and then it disappears and unfortunately it reappears in circles of sorrow. Grief is like that.

Peace is what we want – that's what we seek – whether it's peace within our political elections – peace in the urban cities of America – peace in our families – or peace in our church. The author of this scripture feels rejected from peace; “I have been deprived of peace” (v.17). That is too real for us. We experience times in our lives when peace seems totally absent, elusive and relegated to some other person or situation far, far away from us.

When chaos abounds in our lives – when too much is happening out of our control – when we feel overwhelmed – we suffer and we grieve. And we forget the goodness of God; the abundance and prosperity God has provided for us, both individually and collectively.

We forget God's goodness; the splendor we once found in our faith is gone, “and all that I had hoped from the Lord” (v. 18).

What hopes have you had that are now distant memories? You desperately wanted this or that in your life and it didn't happen or it got wiped out in our recent recession or some other calamity – your hopes dashed. The hopes of people, nations and churches are often stopped by circumstances, events and things beyond their control.

Why dwell on what was – or what never happened? Isn't it easier to forget God? – That too, is very real!

But we remember our pain -- our affliction -- our wandering away from God. We remember so well – and we are brought down; our souls become downcast.

Sometimes the grief of our own dashed hopes, unrealized ambitions and lost dreams makes us bitter and sad.

AND WE LOSE ALL HOPE!!!

Imagine a family – a church family – a people of God who lost everything – their nationality – their central place of worship – their freedom – their faith tested in exile. That's what happened to the Israelites. It's why these five poems written.

Our suffering may be much smaller in comparison – but our grief is still painful -- it can stop us, if we let it, from moving towards God's love, from moving towards the healing we desire.

We must process our feelings, not deny them or hide them. We must provide sacred space for everyone and for their story and give them respect, not blame, if they feel differently and if their voice is not the same as yours or mine. This is difficult work and this is what it will take for our church to heal and move forward.

There is no right or wrong emotion. Feelings are neither good or bad – they are just “feelings.” That's not to lessen their importance to each of us. Perhaps you were raised with these words, “Keep your feelings to yourself. Don't share them.” The more we can talk about and acknowledge our feelings the sooner we will work through our grief and move forward.

We all want to find hope in the midst of despair. The author states, **“Yet, this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.”**

And the hope that is available to you and me is this – the Lord's great love – a love so great we will not be overwhelmed by

our circumstances because his compassions never fail. “They are new every morning.”

And that is “*a morning’s love.*” It’s what I want and miss at times in my life and maybe in yours too.

I miss *a morning’s love* because it always brings healing. I miss a sweet embrace of the new day by a loving partner. I miss the hope given to me by an intimate friend.

Waking up without love is all too real!

Waking up without hope is also, too real!

We must remember, as hard as it is, *a morning’s love* that sustains us and encourages us, is the only way through the grief.

A morning’s love is available to you and me. Imagine every morning, new love pouring into you and me from our Lord. That is very real too. God is so faithful to his people – his love so compassionate and unfailing that every day we awaken, His love surrounds us.

Can we awake to that love?

Can we let hope reign within us?

For God has not abandoned us.

Interestingly, in Hebrew the word for *wait* and *hope* is similar; they're interchangeable. As we wait – we are being hopeful. Hope for something new and different, out there – in the future – we wait for that something to take place.

That *morning's love* helps us change direction – have a new outlook – helps us turnaround and gain a new focus or perspective on our circumstances – so we wait expectantly, because God's love protects us so we are not consumed or overwhelmed. This love is new – not different – just a new source of it, every day for you and for me.

I believe this, if we have a faith confident in God's love, then that faith will contradict or wipe away any hopelessness or suffering we have endured. In the face of adversity, we at Valley Pres Church will move forward in confidence of God's love. We will move from despair to hope.

Doesn't seem like it though – we can despair all we want – but God keeps providing his love and compassions, **"new"** every morning.

God's merciful fidelity to his people is relentless – **"Great is your faithfulness."** However, our fidelity to God may be broken and in need of hope and patience, to wait for God to help us repair our relationships.

This is not easy theology. All of us, at one time or another, have internal struggles within us that things will get better. I believe they will!

In times of profound suffering, we wait with hopeful expectation of God's love -- that is a sure thing – ***A morning's love***, from God, is a sure thing. God gives us hope; love, faithfulness and salvation. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Can we allow ourselves to be embraced by these promises of God? Amen.