

Honoring Life: The Nature of Lament

- Today's Scripture, 2 Samuel 1:17-27, is a lament. Part of the richness and beauty of the Old Testament is that it models for us how to **live fully**, and to feel and experience the full range of human emotions and living. Seeing it modeled in people like David gives us the freedom to live it ourselves.
- David, who lived with exuberance, also lamented with intensity - as we see in today's Scripture. His expressions of joy and pain come from one and the same place: a commitment that **life matters**. Because David honored life extravagantly, he also felt its loss intensely.
- 70% of the Psalms are laments. The whole arena of lament is mission from the more western, Greek language, analytical New Testament. Thanks be to God for giving us both the Old and New Testament.
- Our culture has a style of TV reporting that casts endless visions of catastrophe in a seamless sterile haze. We're even at the point that in order to get noticed one has to do something bad; the worse the act, the greater the notoriety. There is no lament, because there is so little appreciation of the beauty and depth and awe of human life.
- David lamented Saul even though Saul had tried to kill him. David didn't allow Saul's hatred of him to destroy him. Rather lived larger than anything Saul could do to him.
- David and Jonathan shared a common love of truth and beauty and goodness, and these would not end even in death.
- Lament is usually in the form of poetry, for, in the face of such pain and loss, prose simply fails. As Carl Sandburg said, "Poetry is an assault on the unintelligible." The intensity of our lament cannot be captured in prose and only partially so in poetry.
- Eugene Peterson, who has provided the stimulus for some of the above reflections, shares in his book about David, Leap Over A Wall, these words about the power of poetry: "Lament notices and attends, savors and delights - details, images, relationships. Pain entered into, accepted, and owned can become poetry. It's no less pain, but it's no longer ugly. Poetry is our most personal use of words; it's our way of entering experience, not just watching it happen to us, and inhabiting it as our home." (pg. 119)
- David commands that this lament be taught and it was written in the Book of Jashar. He wanted it taught to current and subsequent generations for loss is never private, but is communal; it belongs to all of us. I remember my Dad quoting Lincoln's Gettysburg Address - he was teaching us lament; it was no longer a distant, solitary act in Eastern Pennsylvania; it was our story, our experiences; we were united to something beyond words.
- Portions of the video DJ has put together are a visual lament; visual poetry; we are drawn to a deep connection with those whom we honor, to memory, to life. Other portions of the video celebrate Life, a person's story, and in some measure their story becomes our story; it's the book of Jashar; it is to be taught, so that our lives will be full and large, not diminished and trivialized.
- Finally, no one has more just cause to lament than God, who has from the beginning of human history watched the brokenness and ill-naturedness of His children converge on His only Son, even Jesus the Christ. Jesus' lament from the cross, "My God, My God, why..." is the depth of God calling to the depth of God, which led through death unto life, resurrected life, everlasting life.

Friends and Heroes, Living the Scripture throughout the week

FRIENDS

1. Jonathan and David were best friends, soul mates, heart-connected. Who is your best friend? How did you come to be best friends? Friendship is a sacred covenant, to be nurtured and cherished and honored.
2. What is it about you/your friend that makes you a “great friend?” What are three key elements to being a good friend?”
3. Do you listen well, laugh much and affirm often? Write a note, email, IM to a friend today, for no particular reason, just to tell them that you really appreciate them.
4. Sometimes we are prone to take for granted those who are closest and dearest to us. Do you? What will you do to change that? To be a more consistent friend.
5. Remember Jesus’ invitation to be His friend (John 15:14, 15) and reciprocate His friendship.

HEROES

6. If you have a family member who served this country by serving in the armed services, do or say something today that shows that you honor them, value them and appreciate them for who they are and what they did/are doing.
7. If you know of someone who served in the WWII era, express your gratitude to them.
8. Pause in these days to remember “the mighty who have fallen” those who are “swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.”
9. If you know someone whose view of the current situation in Iraq is different than yours, can you thank God for them and their integrity to feel and believe as they do?
10. Pray for peace.