

Rely On The Lord's Love
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Lamentations 3

For as long as there's been music; for long as there's been poetry, people have expressed deep sadness in songs and poems.

- Mozart's Requiem or Chopin's Funeral March
- The mournful MOAN of THE BLUES
- Hank Williams singing "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"
- Roy Orbison WARBLING "Cry...yy...ing Over YOU"
- Or Eric Clapton expressing his tremendous grief over the tragic death of his 4 year old son in his song "Tears in Heaven" (to be clear...there will be no tears in Heaven!)

Not only do people gravitate toward SAD SONGS...guys, if you really want to take her to a movie she'll love it has to make her _____(cry).

Why do you think people gravitate toward SAD SONGS or SAD MOVIES?

According to Dr. Birgit Wolz, a psychotherapist, author and "cinema therapist" based in Oakland, Calif., the painful emotions released by sad movies often are helpful.

"Sad movies make us feel alive because of catharsis," Wolz says. "Painful emotions can do more than produce tears by watching sad films -- they have also been proven to create stress chemicals in our bodies. Catharsis helps to counter these by releasing buried feelings. Nature has provided us natural cathartic processes like laughing and crying to move us through and beyond our pain."

Sad movies can help us intuitively work through -- and sometimes overcome -- old, unresolved grief and trauma, Wolz notes.

"What makes sad movies so 'enjoyable' is this: They allow us to confront very real and deeply sad feelings in a safe and protected environment," she says. "They allow us to confront real issues by experiencing 'reality' in a safe distance on the screen because our emotional responses feel real."

- It's rare you'll hear me quote Elton John in Sunday School...but if you were a teenager in the 70s like me, you'll recall him singing:

If someone else is suffering enough to write it down
When every single word makes sense
Then it's easier to have those songs around
The kick inside is in the line that finally gets to you
and it feels so good to hurt so bad

And suffer just enough to sing the blues

Turn them on, turn them on
Turn on those sad songs
When all hope is gone
Sad songs say so much

- I guess we can all RELATE to a SAD SONG

One word for a sad song or poem is a LAMENT another is a DIRGE. 1: a song or hymn of grief or lamentation; especially : one intended to accompany funeral or memorial rites. 2: a slow, solemn, and mournful piece of music

- The book of Lamentations is essentially a collection of five SAD POEMS or DIRGES
- God inspired Jeremiah to write over the SORROW and SUFFERING of the people of Judah and the DESTRUCTION of Jerusalem
- You see Judah was invaded THREE TIMES
- In that last INVASION Nebuchadnezzar LEVELED Jerusalem
- He had no mercy on the people and he LOOTED and TORCHED the city
- When the Babylonians left town it was nothing but a SMOLDERING PILE OF RUBBLE
- In LAMENTATIONS Jeremiah is surveying this sad situation and POURING OUT HIS HEART at the TRAGEDY before him
- But, as we'll see Jeremiah doesn't leave us in a state of POETIC DEPRESSION

Here's today's lesson in a "nutshell":

Life is hard...but God is FAITHFUL.

And even in times of suffering:

No matter how deep your despair God has promised he will always be there.

- Let's look at Lamentations 3 beginning in verse 1
- Scholars differ on the interpretation of these first few verses
- Some say they are Jeremiah's PERSONAL LAMENT
- Others say that when Jeremiah says "I am the man..." he's PERSONIFYING the land of Judah
- Either way, he makes his point...they had refused to REPENT...so God's JUDGEMENT had been SEVERE.
- To help us get the point, I'm reading from the New Living Translation (NLT)

Lamentations 3

Jeremiah writes:

- 1 I am the one who has seen the afflictions
that come from the rod of the Lord's anger.
- 2 He has led me into darkness,
shutting out all light.

- 3 He has turned his hand against me
again and again, all day long.
- 4 He has made my skin and flesh grow old.
He has broken my bones.
- 5 He has besieged and surrounded me
with anguish and distress.
- 6 He has buried me in a dark place,
like those long dead.
- 7 He has walled me in, and I cannot escape.
He has bound me in heavy chains.
- 8 And though I cry and shout,
he has shut out my prayers.
- 9 He has blocked my way with a high stone wall;
he has made my road crooked.
- 10 He has hidden like a bear or a lion,
waiting to attack me.
- 11 He has dragged me off the path and torn me in pieces,
leaving me helpless and devastated.
- 12 He has drawn his bow
and made me the target for his arrows.
- 13 He shot his arrows
deep into my heart.
- 14 My own people laugh at me.
All day long they sing their mocking songs.
- 15 He has filled me with bitterness
and given me a bitter cup of sorrow to drink.
- 16 He has made me chew on gravel.
He has rolled me in the dust.
- 17 Peace has been stripped away,
and I have forgotten what prosperity is.
- 18 I cry out, "My splendor is gone!
Everything I had hoped for from the Lord is lost!"
- 19 The thought of my suffering and homelessness
is bitter beyond words.[a]
- 20 I will never forget this awful time,
as I grieve over my loss.

- Sometimes I read scripture and I ask myself the question: Why did God put this in the Bible? Why would God inspire Jeremiah to write this sad poem about what had happened to him and to the land of Judah? What is God trying to teach us by allowing this great prophet to write such a sad song? Why wouldn't God just put encouraging uplifting things in scripture for us to read? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
- Could it be that God is modeling for us, IT'S OKAY TO HAVE A GOOD CRY
- It's OKAY to POUR OUT YOUR HEART TO ME AND TELL ME YOUR SORROWS
- It's OKAY to EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS...and HERE'S WHY

At this point in the poem, Jeremiah LIFTS HIS HEAD and REMEMBER'S what all Christians know...He writes in verse 21:

21 Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:

22 The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.

23 Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.

24 I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance;
therefore, I will hope in him!"

25 The Lord is good to those who depend on him,
to those who search for him.

26 So it is good to wait quietly
for salvation from the Lord.

- What HYMN comes to mind when we read this passage? GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS
- If we REALLY BELIEVE that God is WHO He says He is, like Jeremiah we REMEMBER:
- Life is hard...but God is FAITHFUL.
- And even in times of suffering:
- No matter how deep your despair God has promised he will always be there.

Like Jeremiah, the Sons of Korah in BOTH Psalms 42 and 43 PUSHED BACK against their DESPAIR when they wrote these words:

Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

LIFE IS HARD. But GOD IS GOOD.

- Look back at verses 22 through 26:
- Verse 22: Things may be bad, but what does verse 22 remind us? We are not CONSUMED...we haven't PERISHED
- Verse 23: When does God REPLENISH his MERCY TOWARD US? Every morning.
- It's like a SPRING OF WATER...bubbling up FRESH every day...
- Verse 24: That word PORTION speaks to the fact that EVERY BELIEVER is entitled to our SHARE of God's mercies...NO ONE can take it away! Therefore I will HOPE in Him!
- Verse 25: Who does it say God is GOOD TO? Those that WAIT and SEEK.

Isaiah 40:31

King James Version (KJV)

31But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

- It doesn't matter how LOUD the THUNDER is or how HIGH the waves are or how FIERCE the WINDS are in your storm. Just WAIT...a new supply of God's MERCY and COMPASSION is bubbling up for you and me!
- I just have to: Put (MY) hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
- How many of you were in attendance at HopeQuest Thursday night?
- I was coming home from travel but Susan called me as she was pulling out
- She said it was one of the most moving and powerful nights we've ever had there.
- God moved in a lot of ways: Worship music; a riveting testimony; the Lord's Supper; but she said the evening was PUNCTUATED with...guess what: A SAD SONG.
- If you attended the musical JOSEPH last weekend you'll remember what Susan calls the JAIL SONG the song sung by the Joseph when he seems forgotten in jail
- Justin Tanner who played Joseph sang it again at HopeQuest
- When you think about what the CLIENTS at HQ are going through you'll see why the words are so powerful:

Lyrics to Close Every Door (Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat) :
JOSEPH

Close every door to me, hide all the world from me
Bar all the windows and shut out the light
Do what you want with me, hate me and laugh at me
Darken my daytime and torture my night

Just give me a number instead of my name
Forget all about me and let me decay
I do not matter
I'm only one person

Destroy me completely then throw me away

If my life was important I
Would ask will I live or die
But I know the answers lie far from this world

(BUT THEN THE LYRICS CHANGE...and THE LAST LINES SUM UP THE HOPE THAT JOSEPH HAD AND JEREMIAH HAD AND THE CLIENTS AT HQ HAVE and in YOUR STORM YOU HAVE!)

Close every door to me keep those I love from me
Children of Israel are never alone
For we know we shall find ----- our own peace of mind
For we have been promised ----- a land of our own

[These are Close Every Door (Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat) Lyrics on <http://www.lyricsmania.com/>]

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- No matter how powerful the storm...God will never leave us or forsake us
- If we have accepted Christ as Lord, we're promised that even though LIFE IS HARD...GOD IS GOOD
- I don't know if you're in a storm...coming out of a storm...or about to go into a storm...
- But this I know from experience:
- Great is His Faithfulness...if we'll only WAIT...new MERCIES are on the way!