Sermon Note: Lament
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

We continue our **Call & Response** series having celebrated wonder and acknowledged the critical importance of integrity. Moving from last week's essential question about whether or not our lives align with our faith, we turn to the honest expression of sorrow, grief, and lament. Sometimes this comes from the ways we fall short, and sometimes it's focused on the pain we carry, the losses we've endured, and the suffering we see around us. Psalm 79 is a cry for healing, a cry for help, and a cry for God's enduring presence. Expressing our lament and grief is not a lack of faith. It's one of the ways we stay close to God when nothing else makes sense.

Illustration Videos

Note: This edited clip combines several key moments from the film, running for about 5 minutes. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M1rwfwrbWo
In this edited sequence from *Inside Out* (2015), Joy learns that Sadness isn't something to be feared or erased. It's the very thing that helps Riley reconnect and find her way home.

Why This Video?

Inside Out (2015) tells the story of a young girl named Riley, showing her emotions as characters working inside her mind: Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust. In this sequence, Joy has been doing everything she can to keep Riley happy, even as Riley struggles with her family's move from Minnesota to California. Joy sees Sadness as something to avoid or fix. As the clip unfolds, Joy begins to understand that Sadness isn't the problem, and instead is what helps Riley feel seen, supported, and reconnected. This story reminds us that healing often begins when we stop hiding our hurts and laments.

Video Discussion Questions

1. What emotions stood out most in this clip?
2. Why do you think Joy was so focused on keeping Riley happy?
3. How do you think Riley was affected when Sadness was shut out?
4. What helped Joy realize that Sadness mattered?
5. Have you ever had a moment when you tried to hide your sadness or grief? How did that feel?
6. What happened when Riley finally expressed what she was really feeling?
7. How does this clip challenge the idea that being sad means something is wrong with us?
8. What does this story suggest about the role of sadness—or lament—in healing and connection?

Psalm 79:1-9 (NRSVue)

[1]O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
   they have defiled your holy temple;
   they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
[2]They have given the bodies of your servants
   to the birds of the air for food,
   the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.
[3]They have poured out their blood like water
   all around Jerusalem,
   and there was no one to bury them.
[4]We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
   mocked and derided by those around us.

[5]How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever?
   Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?
[6]Pour out your anger on the nations
   that do not know you
and on the kingdoms
   that do not call on your name.
[7]For they have devoured Jacob
   and laid waste his habitation.

[8]Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;
   let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
   for we are brought very low.
[9]Help us, O God of our salvation,
   for the glory of your name;
deliver us and forgive our sins,
   for your name's sake.

Scripture Study Questions

1. The psalmist begins in verses 1 through 4 by naming deep destruction and grief. What emotions do you hear behind these words?
2. In verse 5, the psalmist seems to blame God or assume that it was the Israelites' fault that they were attacked. Have you ever struggled, wondering if events in your life were a punishment? How did that affect your view of God or your understanding of yourself?
3. In verses 6-7, the psalmist moves from grief to anger toward others. Why do you think this shift happens? What might that reveal about how we process pain?
4. In verses 8-9, the psalmist moves from blame to confession. What does it take to move from blaming others to asking for help and forgiveness? When applying this to our own lives, does this movement feel like spiraling into shame or a movement into strength and wholeness? What makes the difference between these two?

5. The psalm never fully resolves. It's written from the wreckage, not the resolution. How do you relate to this kind of prayer?
6. What's one small way you could bring a spirit of God's compassion and grace into your life this week? What would this look like in prayer, in a relationship, or in how you think about the world?

Additional (Optional) Questions
1. What has happened to the person writing this psalm?
2. How would you describe the psalmist's emotional state? How is the writer feeling?
3. Read verse 5. Have you ever asked God something like that? Did you feel that there was a response?
4. Think of a difficult time in your life. What helped you find hope? Where did hope begin?
5. Have you ever wished God (or someone else) would take revenge on your behalf? What happened next Do you think God takes revenge?
6. The psalmist is raw and real with God. What can that tell you about prayer?
7. How can we echo this psalm in our lives and prayers?

Weekly Action
Take a few minutes this week to be honest with yourself and with God about something that's been weighing on you. It might be a loss, a frustration, a worry, or a moment of regret. You don't need to solve it or explain it—just speak plainly. Then ask God to stay close, even if nothing feels resolved. If it feels right, talk with a trusted friend or spiritual partner about what you shared. You might also try writing down what came up in prayer, noting how God felt present, or setting a time to return and listen again.

Prayer
God of mercy, when the world is broken and we feel broken with it, help us not to turn away from you. Give us the courage to speak truthfully and the grace to hope, even before the healing comes. We trust that your compassion will come quickly. Amen.