



Sunday Evenings at St Mary's, Portchester (Autumn 2020)

“Returning from Exile”

Drawing inspiration, challenge and comfort from those who have been here before.

No. 2 “Songs of Lament”

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, and there we wept when we remembered Zion.” (Psalm 137:1)

Introduction

- Today in the UK we have experienced ‘exile’ and are in ‘a strange land’.
- Entering into the pain of those who have suffered through Coronavirus.
- Christian faith in the goodness and protection of God has been tested. (Ps 37:25)

Israel in exile

- A later acceptance, but in the early stages: sorrow, desolation, abandonment, bitterness
- Psalm 137 ‘By the rivers of Babylon’

Lament in the Bible

Lament is a prayer coming out of pain, either of present circumstances or memory of them.

- One third of the Psalms are laments (see appendix)
- The Book of Job: Job’s cries are of lament (Job 3:11; 15:18)
- Several of the prophets (Habakkuk 3:16)
- The Lamentations of Jeremiah
- New Testament (Mark 10:47);
- Jesus (Matthew 23:37; Mark 14:36; Matt 27:46 c/f Psalm 22)

Lament today

- Tom Wright *“God and the Pandemic”* (SPCK); *Lamentation 1:1 ‘How lonely sits the city that once was full of people.’*
- This is a time for lament: we don’t have easy answers; the inarticulate groaning of the Spirit (Romans 8:18-27)
- Trauma: Dunblane Massacre; September 11th; Church massacred in Sri Lanka
- People need a vocabulary to express their feelings.

Rediscovering Lament

- Writers, pastors, theologians today are rediscovering this. (*“Sowing in tears: how to lament in a church of praise”* by Paul Bradbury, Grove booklets)
- Our selective use of the Psalms in worship and in new worship songs.
- Reasons why we don’t like to use songs of lament in worship
 - The dampening of enthusiasm and joy
 - An admission of defeat and brokenness; the apparent failure of God and faith.
- Lament is corporate expression of loss (bereavement is personal expression).
- A form of compassion, enabling us to travel in solidarity with others.