

The Life of David

Long Live the King

Study 8 | 2 Samuel 1

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- Nada. Have a BBQ, invite your neighbors.

Opportunities to Serve:

- American Cancer Society Relay for Life - Center Slope CG invites you to join their team, go to relayforlife.org/IKEAredhookNY, click on "Sign Up," then "Join an Existing Team," and search for "Brooklyn Presbyterian Church."

"The Lament of the King"

The sermon text for Sunday will be 2 Samuel 1:1-4;11-12;17-27. I suggest reading the entirety of chapter 1 for your discussions.

1. How do people in our culture generally 'process' their grief? How do you personally deal with profound loss and sadness? What are the sources we turn to for comfort?

Your group can run a list out there of ways our culture processes grief (denial, ignore it, medicate it, grieve it, lament it, cry it out, rage, depression, stiff upper lip, with friends and family, etc.) or it may be helpful for them to share stories of how they or others have processed grief and sadness. It may be helpful to discuss how different cultures within our overall culture process tragedy (ethnically, religiously, socio-economically, etc.). You can do the same sort of list/story telling to answer the last question about what sources we turn to for comfort (the likely candidates are church, spirituality, God, food, sex, drugs, withdrawal into self, friends, family, money, vacation, work, books, therapy, etc.).

2. How does David lament the deaths of Saul and Jonathan? What is significant about his lament? Who does he involve and how do they participate?

Notice that David's lament is very physical, it involves his body as well as his soul. He tears his clothes (v. 11), he weeps (v. 12), he fasts for a day (v. 12). His body posture matches the occasion.

Second, notice that right away, David's personal lament is also corporate. All the men who are with David join him in lamenting the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and for all the God's people (v. 11-12). Not only that, but David also composes a psalm of lament to be taught to the people of Judah (v. 18). David's army and all God's people are to lament this tragedy together and they are taught how to do so. David may feel the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and the defeat of Israel the most acutely, but the sorrow affects everyone.

We have covered the last few weeks how Saul turned from being God's chosen king to being God's enemy. Saul winds up being a new Goliath, a new serpent in God's place. He has attempted numerous times to kill David and his own son Jonathan. One would think David would rejoice at the news that Saul is now dead and he can finally fulfill what has been rightfully his for some time now, the kingship of God's people. Yet, David does not do so. He graciously emphasizes the good that Saul has done and

remembers Saul for what God intended Saul to be, a righteous king of Israel on God's behalf.

Verse 26, David specifically laments his "brother Jonathan." Notice the raw anguish with which David mourns Jonathan's death. David's words do not carry sexual overtones, but emphasize Jonathan's radical self-denial in giving up his rights to the throne in allegiance to God's anointed, David. Jonathan risks his own life to see the success of God's plan fulfilled in David. These two shared a deep love and support of one another, and David rightfully expresses his lament for Jonathan's death with these strong words.

3. What do we learn from David about how we might deal faithfully with disappointment and lack in our lives? In what ways is it difficult for us to lament when tragedy strikes? What would it look like for us to learn to faithfully lament together?

The first thing we learn from David is that as God's people, we are called to lament when disappointment, hurt, and tragedy occurs. Stoicism and/or denial are not faithful responses for the Christian when tragedy occurs. Like David, we are invited to be completely bare with God about our anguish.

Second, we are called to lament faithfully TOGETHER. Lament should be a corporate action for the people of God. Personal tragedies may affect us individually the most acutely, but our whole church family should be invited and allowed to enter into our grief with us. This of course is a two way street, the ones hurt must be willing to let their church family process grief with them and those invited must be willing to enter into one's grief with them.

Why is this often very difficult for us as a church family? I think the primary reason is that we simply do not know how to lament faithfully. We are not well versed in the stories given to us (like 2 Sam 1) in how God's people have faithfully lamented corporately when tragedy has struck. We are also not well versed in the laments that God has given us to teach us and shape us how to lament faithfully (as David did for the people in this chapter). The psalter is God's corporate hymnbook to shape God's people how to lean into the world faithfully, and lament is one of it's primary categories.

We as a church family are called to lament together. There should exist room in our gathered worship, our community groups, and our day to day relationships for us to lament with each other. If you feel like you don't know what to say or do when grief comes to you, how about this suggestion. Involve others, ask them to lament with you. Go to the psalms,

use them as they are intended, corporate prayers to God (psalms of lament include 3, 6, 42-44, 77). As the psalms shape you how to lean into grief faithfully, be honest and real with God about your grief. It is right to confess to God that this pain is not the way it is meant to be. And from that grief, call to God to be faithful to his promise to end pain and suffering in this life, to restore creation to the way it was meant to be, to end all strife and death, and to restore us to right relationship with him and with each other. Remind one another of the hope we have in Jesus' resurrection and his coming again to set all things right. I'm not sure how appropriate it is to tear your clothes these days, but it doesn't hurt to physically take a posture of dependence upon the Lord in your lament. Getting on your knees together shapes your heart and soul in the midst of your grief and often anger with God in the midst of your grief.

Another suggestion is to involve the church family during corporate worship. My family experienced a year of pain and disappointment a few years ago that was crushing us. At the encouragement of a dear friend of mine, during the "Prayers of the People" time in gathered worship, we shared with our church family the grief we had been enduring and asked them to pray with and for us. Our pastor immediately turned to one of the psalms of lament and we read it responsively, and then sang another psalm of lament. While our pain did not disappear in a moment, the way in which we were processing our grief changed immediately. By confessing our grief honestly, with our brothers and sisters in Christ, using the psalms to shape our lament we began to lean into our grief in a much more faithful way. Not to mention that by making our pain known, others entered into our struggle, not to try and fix it, but to bear this burden with us and remind us of that while this pain was not what God intended for his creatures, we could still hope and trust in him. This was not trite or right answer, it was restorative and healing for us. It is not out of the question to approach your pastors ahead of time and ask for something similar.

One last note. David mourns the death of an enemy of the worst kind, an enemy of God and his people from within the covenant people of God. At the same time, his lament includes cursing upon the people and place where Saul and Jonathan were cut down (v. 20-21). Two things to challenge our practice of lament. One, if David can lament the death of a fallen man like Saul, then we too can and should lament even when our enemies themselves are cut down (either metaphorically speaking or in actual death). Second, and along those same lines, our lament should pray that the cause of evil be thwarted. We should lament wherever injustice, oppression, and violence exists and with that lament, call for God to act in his righteousness. Of course, the goal to that thwarting should be that of repentance and faithfulness to the one true King. So that in that repentance and faith, the wrath of God poured out on Jesus covers sin and allows for

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healing and restoration of God's kingdom to overtake where evil once reigned.

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