

LENT DEVOTIONAL



LENT PROGRAM

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ABOUT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rooted in the Reformed tradition, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to the formation of women and men for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

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Spiritual Formation Certificate

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Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology

Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

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LENT DEVOTIONAL APRIL 8, 2020

SCRIPTURE

LAMENTATIONS 2:1-9

1 How the Lord in his anger has humiliated daughter Zion! He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. 2 The Lord has destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of daughter Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers. 3 He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn his right hand from them in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. 4 He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; he has killed all in whom we took pride in the tent of daughter Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. 5 The Lord has become like an enemy; he has destroyed Israel; He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds, and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation. 6 He has broken down his booth like a garden, he has destroyed his tabernacle; the LORD has abolished in Zion festival and sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. 7 The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; a clamor was raised in the house of the LORD as on a day of festival. 8 The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of daughter Zion; he stretched the line; he did not withhold his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languish together. 9 Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; guidance is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Dr. David G. Dawson '72, Mission (2011)

. . . in the day of his anger. Lament is difficult for American Christians today because it means that something terrible has gone wrong and we have no control over a way of escape. Either someone has done something to us, or our actions have led to a catastrophe and there is no salvation.

The poet of Lamentations lived in the midst of such impossible times. The year is 586 BCE. Babylon has rained death and destruction on Jerusalem. The devastation was unimaginable and too brutal to describe. The depth of inhumanity was too much to portray even as a scene in Game of Thrones. The poet lamented the terrible things being done to his people.

But it is worse than that. They have brought it on themselves. Not only has Yahweh abandoned them because of their infidelity—Yahweh was so angry as to be the actual perpetrator of their suffering. Idolatry had been exercised in a myriad of expressions. Personal piety had been flaunted in distortions of their relationship to money, sex, and power. Corporate expressions of international intrigue, arrogance, and crude nationalism had flourished.

When we lament, it is because our sin is so great and persistent and God is so angry that there is nothing left to do but lament. For the writer of Mark, lament is not simply about a disaster of the past. When he describes the mocking humiliation of Jesus at his crucifixion (15:29-32), he draws on Lamentations 2:15-16. Jesus is abandoned by God and mocked by all for the sake of the world's redemption.

What can come of such absolute love if not confession of sin, repentance, and truth-telling? Throw oneself on the mercy of God demonstrated most profoundly in the cross.

PRAYER

God, we have sinned against you and each other. We are not worthy to be called your children. Immerse us in deep lament. Do not allow us to excuse our sins. Meet us at the cross, where our lament can be done in the presence of the perfect suffering of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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