3rd Sunday in Lent
Job 3, “Learning to Lament”

There’s a skit from the old show MADTV where the actor Bob Newhart plays a therapist. A lady comes into his office, and he says that he can guarantee the session won’t last longer than 5 minutes, and invites the woman to talk about her problems. She says that the whole reason she is here was because she has a fear of being buried alive in a box. After this back and forth funny dialogue, the counselor says “I’ve got two words that are going to take care of all of this.” The woman looks puzzled, but excited. He says, “Here are your two words: STOP IT!”

Often times that’s how we react when people lament.

We are continuing our series on the book of Job, and today we’ll be zeroed in on learning to lament. Lament is just a fancy word for passionately expressing grief. There are certain parts of the Old Testament that are more notorious for laments than others—and they’re often areas of scripture that we quickly skip over. I would contend that any area of scripture where there are people just complaining we skip over because we have a problem with people grieving or lamenting. When someone approaches us with a lament we simply don’t like dealing with it. We might throw out phrases like: “Keep your chin up!” “Think positively.” “Big boys don’t cry.” Or maybe we even say “STOP IT!”

**Job’s Lament**

Those phrases don’t work for Job, though. The life that Job knew had come to a screeching halt. Nothing was the same. Perhaps in shock, like any of us might be, he sat silent for seven days, but in chapter 3 Job breaks his silence in a massive shriek. Five times in chapter three Job cries out “Why?” “Why did I not perish at birth?” (Job 3:11). “Why were there knees to receive me?” (Job 3:12). “Why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child? Why is light given to those in misery?” (Job 3:20). “Why is life given to a man?” (Job 3:23). Job ends his
lament with these words: “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to 
me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil” (Job 3:25–26).

Jobs everything had been taken away. Everything he valued. Everything he loved. 
Everything that he had invested in. He had become an object of Satan’s horror. In chapters one 
and two Job is the model of godliness and patience. But now in chapter three, Job lets it all 
hang out. He looked at all of this hardship and cried out lamenting, refusing to let someone say 
to him “Stop it!”

Learning from Job

I wish I could tell you that Job was able to deal with his sorrow, and that maybe we could 
deal with our sorrow, by going around it, tunneling underneath it, or taking a big jump over it. 
But that’s a big fat lie. Job dealt with sorrow, and we deal with sorrow, by going through it. 
Notice that I’m not saying that we get past our sorrow. If the sorrow is deep enough, in this life 
we will never get past it. But we can get through it.

But it’s tough, so we try to just stop it! We try to keep our heads up. We try to deal with 
it all on our own. We try to survive life’s losses without lamenting. Grief is unpleasant and messy 
and ugly so we try avoiding it altogether— but that doesn’t work.

Unresolved Issues Cause More Issues

There are things that happened to us as children; there are things that happened to us 
at school; there are things that happened to us in marriage; and we haven’t grieved over the 
pain. We’ve been told by so many that we need to learn to get over it- so we’ve never learned 
to lament, we’ve never learned to cry out. Some of us are stuck at age 10, 18, 28, whatever,
because we didn’t grieve a major trauma in lives. And we wonder why we have anxieties and
and fears and low self-esteem... It’s because we haven’t learned how to lament.

Unresolved, unmourned grief causes a boatload of problems! So many are stuck in all
varieties of bad behavior because they never grieved over an alcoholic dad or an unloving
mother or mistreatment or prejudice or bigotry or loss. Rather than actually feeling it, actually
grieving over it, crying about it, actually going through the season of mourning, it’s so easy to
just put our heads down and ignore it. Ignoring doesn’t solve our problems, though.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”
Who gets comforted? Those who have the courage to mourn. What is Jesus saying? Cover-ups
don’t get comforted. If I cover up the pain, if I ignore the pain, if I deny the pain, if I pretend it
doesn’t exist, if I’m too afraid of my emotions, then I don’t get comforted, and all the pain gets
bottled up and stays right where it is. We learn to lament by going through pain— but it’s not
easy.

**CARE Rubric**

We learn a great deal from all of those Old Testament people who cried out their
laments. There’s a helpful rubric to use as we lament that we remember by the word CARE.

We start by **complaining**. It’s ok not to be ok! In chapter 3 Job is so low that he feels
death is better than life. He complains, “Why should I have to go on living if living involves so
much pain!”

We move from complaining to **appealing**. Appeal to God’s character and who he is. His
attributes, His character, the nature of God.
We then begin reminding God of his promises. Remind God of his truth. Remind God of what He said. Remind God of His reputation. In reminding God of who He is, we also reminding ourselves of all this as well.

Finally we end with expressing. Express trust in God’s wisdom and the things we don’t understand. In this we express that on this side of heaven we might have no idea why we go through certain situations, and that’s because we aren’t the creator of the universe.

**Looking Through the Pain**

What we come to understand in this whole process is that we survive sorrow by looking through it. We don’t wallow in our weepings, and we certainly don’t forget it, but we look through the sorrow to see Jesus who knows what it is like to lament as he cried out on the cross “My God, my God, why have your forsaken me?” as they offered him vinegar to drink and gambled over his clothes. We look through our suffering and see the one who has suffered for us, and who suffers with us. The one who took on death so that we may have life.

In Psalm 30:5, David says this: “Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” It’s okay to weep during the long nights of life. Refuse to let that “stop it” mentality get in your way of crying out in suffering. But also affirm that joy will come in the morning; because of the first Easter morning when Christ’s own lament was turned into a song of everlasting deliverance. Never forget that in the midst of your suffering: Jesus loves you, and so do I. Amen.