GOD, WHY? PLEASE, MAYBE.
SERIES: LAMENTATIONS: THERE MAY YET BE HOPE

Lamentations 5

My family loves to ski. That’s one thing we’ve been able to do during the course of the pandemic. A few months ago, I was skiing with my children, and we were coming down a fairly flat run. I rounded a corner and skied over what I thought were some clumps of dirt on top of the snow.

It turns out there was no snow, and it was a patch of gravel. I learned that skis don’t work on gravel. I couldn’t control myself, so I went flying off the run and ended up on the ground in a pile of rocks. It was pretty painful.

Do you know what my first thought was? It wasn’t whether I was seriously hurt. My first thought was to look around and find out who saw my embarrassing fall. I was more concerned with the shame of falling than any physical damage I might have done to my body.

It turns out that I’m not all that unique. A Norwegian researcher who has studied this suggests that most people find it more important to avoid social pain than physical pain. Think about that. We’re more afraid of looking bad than feeling bad. If I reflect on my life, that rings true. Shame can be crippling.

Today is our last week in the book of Lamentations. Next week Scott Grant will finish the series by considering how Jesus laments. Today we’ll look at the final chapter of this powerful book. We’ve seen an incredible amount of pain and suffering over the last several weeks.

Today a new theme is introduced. The final chapter of Lamentations addresses the pain of suffering and the shame that comes when we endure pain. We’ll see the author reflect on the disgrace of everything his people have gone through. The book will end with a tentative prayer for help. In the last four verses, the author will say something along the lines of God, Why? Please. Maybe?

I have noticed something about pain. When we go through something difficult, there is the thing that we are dealing with. That’s hard enough. But then there are other layers of stuff that we often add on top. There’s the pain, but then we add on top guilt or shame or any number of other things.

It’s a devastating cycle. As if the trauma isn’t bad enough, victims are ashamed of going through it. It’s that shame that makes it so hard to heal.

In Lamentations 5, we’ll see the author face shame head on. Something incredibly powerful is going to happen. We will see that God doesn’t always heal our pain, but God can take away our shame. God doesn’t always heal our pain, but God will take away our shame.

See my shame

Let’s get a basic orientation to chapter 5 before we jump into the details. This chapter takes place after Jerusalem is destroyed. The siege is over, and the Babylonians have won. Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem, living in a burned-out city.

This chapter is unique in the book of Lamentations because it is not an acrostic poem. The first four chapters are all acrostics, which mean that each verse starts with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet. The equivalent of A, B, C, and so forth. That’s why chapters 1, 2, and 4 have 22 verses and chapter 3 has 66 verses.

Chapter 5 also has 22 verses, but it isn’t an acrostic. However, it’s one of the most carefully structured poems in the Old Testament. Each verse has two distinct halves, and each half features two words in parallel.

Here is the entire chapter of Lamentations 5. Notice the way each verse breaks into two halves. I’ve color coded some words in each half to show the parallels.
Lamentations 5

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;

2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,

3 We have become orphans, fatherless;

4 We must pay for the water we drink;

5 Our pursuers are at our necks;

6 We have given the hand to Egypt,

7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more;

8 Slaves rule over us;

9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,

10 Our skin is hot as an oven

11 Women are raped in Zion,

12 Princes are hung up by their hands;

13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,

14 The old men have left the city gate,

15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;

16 The crown has fallen from our head;

17 For this our heart has become sick,

18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate;

19 But you, O LORD, reign forever;

20 Why do you forget us forever,

21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!

22 unless you have utterly rejected us,

look, and see our disgrace!

our homes to foreigners.

our mothers are like widows.

the wood we get must be bought.

we are weary; we are given no rest.

and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

and we bear their iniquities.

there is none to deliver us from their hand.

because of the sword in the wilderness.

with the burning heat of famine.

young women in the towns of Judah.

no respect is shown to the elders.

and boys stagger under loads of wood.

the young men their music.

our dancing has been turned to mourning.

woe to us, for we have sinned!

for these things our eyes have grown dim,

jackals prowl over it.

your throne endures to all generations.

why do you forsake us for so many days?

Renew our days as of old—

and you remain exceedingly angry with us.
The author says, "Remember what has befallen us; look and see our disgrace." You can see the parallel between "Remember" and "look" as well as between "befallen" and "disgrace."

```
Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;  
look, and see our disgrace!

2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,  
our homes to foreigners.

3 We have become orphans, fatherless;  
our mothers are like widows.

4 We must pay for the water we drink;  
the wood we get must be bought.

5 Our pursuers are at our necks;  
we are weary; we are given no rest.

6 We have given the hand to Egypt,  
and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more;  
and we bear their iniquities.

8 Slaves rule over us;  
there is none to deliver us from their hand.

9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,  
because of the sword in the wilderness.

10 Our skin is hot as an oven  
with the burning heat of famine.

11 Women are raped in Zion,  
young women in the towns of Judah.

12 Princes are hung up by their hands;  
no respect is shown to the elders.

13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill;  
and boys stagger under loads of wood.

14 The old men have left the city gate,  
the young men their music.

15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;  
our dancing has been turned to mourning.

16 The crown has fallen from our head;  
woe to us, for we have sinned!

17 For this our heart has become sick,  
for these things our eyes have grown dim,

18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate;  
jackals prowl over it.

19 But you, O LORD, reign forever;  
your throne endures to all generations.

20 Why do you forget us forever,  
why do you forsake us for so many days?

21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!  
Renew our days as of old—

22 unless you have utterly rejected us,  
and you remain exceedingly angry with us.
```
In the second verse, the parallel is between "inheritance" and "homes" along with "strangers" and "foreigners."

Lamentations 5

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers;
We have become orphans, fatherless;
We must pay for the water we drink;
Our pursuers are at our necks;
We have given the hand to Egypt,
Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
Slaves rule over us;
We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
Our skin is hot as an oven
Women are raped in Zion,
Princes are hung up by their hands;
Young men are compelled to grind at the mill;
The old men have left the city gate;
The joy of our hearts has ceased;
The crown has fallen from our head;
For this our heart has become sick,
for Mount Zion which lies desolate;
But you, O LORD, reign forever;
Why do you forget us forever,
Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!
unless you have utterly rejected us,
Lament, and see our disgrace!
Our homes to foreigners,
Our mothers are like widows.
The wood we get must be bought.
we are weary; we are given no rest.
and to Assyria, to get bread enough.
and we bear their iniquities.
there is none to deliver us from their hand.
because of the sword in the wilderness.
with the burning heat of famine.
young women in the towns of Judah.
no respect is shown to the elders.
and boys stagger under loads of wood.
the young men their music.
our dancing has been turned to mourning.
woe to us, for we have sinned!
for these things our eyes have grown dim,
jackals prowl over it.
your throne endures to all generations.
why do you forsake us for so many days?
Renew our days as of old—
and you remain exceedingly angry with us.
The third verse parallels "orphans" and "widows" along with "fatherless" and "mothers."

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.

We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.

We must pay for the wine we drink;
the young must stagger under loads of wood.

Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.

We have given the hand to Egypt,
and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
and we bear their iniquities.

Slaves rule over us;
there is none to deliver us from their hand.

We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
because of the sword in the wilderness.

Our skin is hot as an oven
with the burning heat of famine.

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.

Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.

We have given the hand to Egypt,
and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.

Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.

We have given the hand to Egypt,
In the fourth, it's "pay" mirroring "bought" and "water" with "wood". The same parallels happen throughout the whole chapter.

Lamentations 5

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!
our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.
2 We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.
3 We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.
4 Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.
5 We have given the hand to Egypt,
and to Assyria, to get bread enough.
7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
and we bear their iniquities.
8 Slaves rule over us;
there is none to deliver us from their hand.
9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
because of the sword in the wilderness.
10 Our skin is hot as an oven
with the burning heat of famine.
11 Women are raped in Zion,
young women in the towns of Judah.
12 Princes are hung up by their hands;
no respect is shown to the elders.
13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,
and boys stagger under loads of wood.
14 The old men have left the city gate,
the young men their music.
15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;
our dancing has been turned to mourning.
16 The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 For this our heart has become sick,
for these things our eyes have grown dim,
18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate;
jackals prowl over it.
19 But you, O LORD, reign forever;
your throne endures to all generations.
20 Why do you forget us forever,
why do you forsake us for so many days?
21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!
Renew our days as of old—
22 unless you have utterly rejected us,
and you remain exceedingly angry with us.
The effect of this is powerful. Nothing makes sense in the world around Jeremiah. Everything has been destroyed, and the world is in chaos. But this poem has structure and predictability, and balance. The poem makes sense. The poem has order.

Jeremiah takes a world that doesn’t make sense, and he shapes it into a lament that makes perfect sense. He imposes order on his chaos.

The chapter begins by making a request of God. It’s the same request we saw him make at the end of chapter 2. It’s the most frequent ask in the whole book. Once again, here’s the first verse.

**Lamentations 5:1:**

*Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace!*

In this verse, Jeremiah asks God to look and see. There is a twist here: "see our disgrace." This is a remarkable thing to ask.

Think back to my ski crash. I didn’t want anyone to see my disgrace. Consider a time that you’ve felt shame. Did you want people to look on your shame? Didn’t you want to do anything you could to hide it?

In Lamentations, this word that’s used for disgrace refers to the kind of thing that you don’t want to be seen. In fact, the only other place in the Old Testament where the exact phrase "see my disgrace" is used is in Isaiah 47:3. In that context, it is a prophecy of judgment: "Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen."

But here, the author of Lamentations is asking God to look upon their disgrace. That’s powerful. The deadliness of shame lies in the fact that it tempts us to hide. We retreat into a dark place and shield ourselves from the judging eyes of others. But not here.

This is what lament teaches us. When we are honest with God with everything we’re going through, it’s like the sun breaks through the clouds of our shame, and light disperses the darkness. There is no shame in shame. There is no shame in pain. When you are suffering, face your shame.

When I was in high school and college, I developed an addiction to pornography. I couldn’t control it. I couldn’t escape it. There were seasons where it dominated my life. Along with the habit came a crushing sense of shame. For years I didn’t talk about it to anyone.

One day I went to a Christian fellowship meeting on campus. With over 50 people in the room, another student stood up in front and confessed to an addiction to pornography. I was stunned. Here was someone saying to a room full of people, "See my disgrace."

He faced his shame. In doing that, not only did he find freedom, but that began a journey for me. Facing his shame enabled me to face mine. When I heard him speak about his struggle, it was like a spell over me had been broken. Over the next several years, God gave me freedom as well.

Can you turn to God and say these words? "Remember what has befallen me. Look and see my disgrace." Can you say those words to others? Can you be honest with what you’ve gone through? Or are you ashamed to admit your pain?

This is the first step to seeing God take away our shame. We can't heal from it if we can't face it. As the passage continues, the author faces it full on. He gives a comprehensive list of all their disgrace.

**Things fall apart**

Let’s look again at our overview of the chapter. As Jeremiah details the trauma, his list breaks down nicely into several different sections.

(Image on page 8.)
Lamentations 5

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace!

2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

3 We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

4 We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought.

5 Our pursuers are at our necks; we are weary; we are given no rest.

6 We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities.

8 Slaves rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.

9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.

10 Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.

11 Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah.

12 Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders.

13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill, and boys stagger under loads of wood.

14 The old men have left the city gate, the young men their music.

15 The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.

16 The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned!

17 For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim,

18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate; jackals prowl over it.

19 But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.

20 Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?

21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—

22 unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.
Each of these sections deals with a different kind of disgrace that the people have endured. Not only does Jeremiah offer his shame to be seen, but he also catalogs it in great detail.

### Lamentations 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>诗句</th>
<th>中文翻译</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;</td>
<td>look, and see our disgrace!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,</td>
<td>our homes to foreigners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We have become orphans, fatherless;</td>
<td>our mothers are like widows.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We must pay for the water we drink;</td>
<td>the wood we get must be bought.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Our pursuers are at our necks;</td>
<td>we are weary; we are given no rest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. We have given the hand to Egypt,</td>
<td>and to Assyria, to get bread enough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Our fathers sinned, and are no more.</td>
<td>and we bear their iniquities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Slaves rule over us;</td>
<td>there is none to deliver us from their hand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. We get our bread at the peril of our lives,</td>
<td>because of the sword in the wilderness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Our skin is hot as an oven</td>
<td>with the burning heat of famine.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Women are raped in Zion,</td>
<td>young women in the towns of Judah.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Princes are hung up by their hand;</td>
<td>young men is shown to the elders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Young men are compelled to go and all the way;</td>
<td>and boys staggers under loads of wood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The old men have left the city gate,</td>
<td>the young men their music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The joy of our hearts has ceased;</td>
<td>our dancing has been turned to mourning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The crown has fallen from our head;</td>
<td>woe to us, for we have sinned!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. For this our heart has become sick,</td>
<td>for these things our eyes have grown dim,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. for Mount Zion which lies desolate;</td>
<td>jackals prowl over it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. But you, O LORD, reign forever;</td>
<td>your throne endures to all generations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Why do you forget us forever,</td>
<td>why do you forsake us for so many days?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!</td>
<td>Renew our days as of old—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. unless you have utterly rejected us,</td>
<td>and you remain exceedingly angry with us.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four different themes emerge. God’s people have been DISPLACED. They have been OPPRESSED. They have become DEJECTED. It’s a comprehensive account of the trauma that is being experienced by the remnant left behind in the ruined city.

Read from verses 2 through 18 below, moving through each of these categories. It’ll take a while, but I want you to read carefully. Try to imagine living in a burned-out city, the smoke still rising. Everything is destroyed; trying to make life work.

Lamentations 5:2-18:

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.
We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.
We must pay for the water we drink; the wood we get must be bought.

Our pursuers are at our necks; we are weary; we are given no rest.
We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to get bread enough.
Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities.
Slaves rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.
We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.
Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.

Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah.
Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders.
Young men are compelled to grind at the mill, and boys stagger under loads of wood.
The old men have left the city gate, the young men their music.

The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.
The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned!
For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim,
for Mount Zion which lies desolate; jackals prowl over it.

Scott Grant and I studied the book of Lamentations with four other pastors from our area. You’ve heard from two of them on previous Sundays: Pastor Felicia Larson and Pastor Kaloma Smith. The other two pastors are Asian American. What struck me right away was that you couldn’t read these words with pastors who are people of color and not think about the issue of race within our churches and our country.

Last year we saw the issue of violence against young black men rise to the surface. Many of us watched the murder of George Floyd captured on video. We listened to stories of persecution, bias, prejudiced housing policies, and violence. We know these things break the heart of God.

This week, we witnessed the murder of eight people in Atlanta, six of whom were Asian America. For the past several weeks, we’ve seen devastating hate crimes against Asian Americans. Vandalism and violence. My heart has broken, as I know many of yours have as well. In case it wasn’t already obvious, it became clear that black and white is not the only racial issue in our country.

In the past year, our eyes have been opened to what it means to be a person of color in this country. These four words are a pretty accurate summary. It often involves being displaced, oppressed, violated, and becoming dejected.

Something Jeremiah says in the middle of this section can help us to understand the brokenness that we see all around us. In verse 7, he raises an issue that runs throughout the book of Lamentations. That verse reads, “Our fathers sinned and we bear their iniquities.”

Remember that the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 was discipline for centuries of ignoring God. This was justice for generations of disobedience. And that doesn’t really seem fair. Why should these people be punished for the mistakes of the generations before them?
But it wasn't just punishment for the sins of the past. Because the sins of the past created grooves in their society. Patterns of behavior. Habits. Assumptions. Deeply ingrained convictions about how the world worked. Injustice doesn't just happen through one off incidents—it infects a society.

Just as we need to face our own shame, we need to be able to face the shame of our broken world. We need to see how our fathers have created patterns of sin that we have inherited. Some we recognize. Some we reject. But some are insidious and it takes a disaster like the destruction of Jerusalem or the murder of George Floyd or the killings in Atlanta to help us see.

But we have to see the brokenness. Only then can we respond. We start by facing the brokenness.

Do you see how we are bearing the iniquities of our fathers? Do you see how our fathers have sinned?

They have been perpetrators of racial injustice. They have viewed women as lesser than men. They have not been bold about the gospel. They have created and participated in a culture of celebrity rather than humility, even within the church where the last ought to be first. They have not spoken clearly about sexuality in our culture. They have fallen prey to our own patterns of sexual sin: pornography and affairs and sexual addiction. They have been more excited about tracking our next Amazon package than the return of Jesus. They have succumbed to cultural norms instead of holding firm to biblical norms. They have relegated worship to one hour on Sunday morning. They have favored consumerism over discipleship.

This, and so much more, is the legacy that we inherit from our fathers. These are the patterns and assumptions that we live among. This is what it means to say that there is systemic racism around us. There is also systemic consumerism, systemic sexism, systemic sexual confusion. Our world is broken by sin. We live with systemic idolatry.

Look around. We are displaced; we are oppressed; we are violated; we are dejected. Our brothers and sisters of color experience this in a particular way because of the history of race in this country. We need to face that. And we need to be willing to face the brokenness that spills out into every area of our world.

Our city may not be burning, but our culture is not okay. Our fathers have sinned, and we bear their iniquities. If God can really take away our shame, what should we do? What is the path forward?

Please

This chapter's final verses are some of the most honest and raw pleas to God in the Bible. Four verses. Four simple moves. We will hear Jeremiah address God. He will ask God why. He will plead for help. He will end with uncertainty. God, Why? Please, maybe.

Lamentations 5:19-22:

But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.
20 Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?
21 Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!
Renew our days as of old—
22 unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

Jeremiah starts by acknowledging that God is still on his throne. The actual place of God's throne—the temple in Jerusalem—has been pulverized. Anything valuable has been taken to Babylon; only rubble remains. Despite that, God's eternal throne endures.

Then Jeremiah asks the question we always ask when we suffer: "Why?" He doesn't only ask why this has happened. He asks why God has forgotten and forsaken. Of course, we know God hasn't done that. But in the aftermath of trauma, this is what it feels like. It feels like God has left us alone. That's the effect of shame.

So when Jeremiah's request comes, this is the issue he wants to be addressed. He doesn't want the city to be repaired. He wants the relationship with God to be restored.

This is what we need when we are deep in the pit of shame. The first step is not for God to fix the problem but for him to take the shame away. The shame paralyzes us. We have to be restored to God so that we can move forward. When we are embraced by the arms of God, our shame dissolves away.

I think it's shame that makes it hard to face racism in our country. I think it's shame that makes it hard to face the fact that we care more about comfort than evangelism. I think it's shame that makes it hard to face...
all of our brokenness. But when we are restored to God, we can move forward.

And yet, this place is so vulnerable. It’s risky to ask this. By the time we have gotten to this point, we have completely laid ourselves bare. We invited God to look at our disgrace. We outlined it in every shocking detail. Then we ask for restoration. It’s a position of complete dependence on God. We can’t offer anything. Nothing we can do at this point can restore us to God. It’s all up to him.

That’s why I love the last verse of this book. It is so authentic to our experience. When you get to this place where you open yourself up to God, it’s hard to feel confident. So the author ends with this note of uncertainty: "unless..." Restore us... unless. It’s as if Jeremiah just trails off. He’s faced his shame. He’s faced the brokenness. He’s come before God. But he’s still a bit uncertain. The book of Lamentations doesn’t end; it just fizzles out.

This is real. This is how I often feel. God, are you there? Why is this happening? Please restore me. Unless you’re gone forever.

This is lament. This is what we are left with.

**Conclusion**

In our final chapter of Lamentations, we have seen Jeremiah address the issue of shame. He lays it bare before God. He lists all the details, and he asks for restoration from God. I told you that God takes away our shame, but the book of Lamentations ends with uncertainty. How do we know that God takes away our shame?

We may still feel uncertain about God, but we know the answer to this last verse in Lamentations. We know that God is not exceedingly angry with us. We know that because of what we are going to celebrate over the next several weeks.

On Good Friday, we’ll remember how God’s anger was poured out, not on us, but on his beloved son. We’ll see Jesus displaced, oppressed, violated, and dejected. All for our sakes.

Then we’ll celebrate his resurrection—the final evidence that God’s anger has been satiated. That’s the message of Easter. God has not utterly rejected us. He does not remain exceedingly angry at us. His anger has been dealt with. At great cost to himself, he has resolved his anger. He has forgiven.

Jeremiah gives us a powerful picture of what it looks like to lament. But his lament is not complete because he not know how the story resolves in Jesus Christ. If we know Jesus, we have the complete picture. We can lament with the same honesty, depth, and transparency. But we do so in the full knowledge that God has made way for us to be restored to him. There is no "unless" in our lament. We lament in hope.