

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS

SERIES: LAMENTATIONS: THERE MAY YET BE HOPE



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Luke 13:34-35,
19:41-44

Final Message
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Luke 13:34-35, 19:41-44

What do you want?

If you think about it for a few minutes, you'll probably come up with many answers. However else you would answer the question, perhaps you might also answer the question this way: "I want to be wanted."

What does Jesus want? Perhaps Jesus would also come up with many answers. However, we know at least one of the answers, because in the gospel of Luke, he comes right out and tells us what he wants.

What we want and what Jesus wants: what do they have to do with each other?

In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah, looking back, laments the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army in 586 B.C. More than six hundred years later, in the gospel of Luke, Jesus also laments the destruction of Jerusalem, but he's looking forward, evidently to the coming of the Roman army 70 A.D.

In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah says, somewhat tentatively, "There may yet be hope" (Lamentations 3:29). Is there hope for this broken world?

Killing the prophets

Luke 13:34-35:

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
35 Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"**

Jerusalem, where the temple was located, represented Israel as a whole. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of Jerusalem, he's not only speaking of its citizens but also of all Israel.

Jesus recalls Jerusalem's history of killing prophets and others whom God sent to it. In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah also accused Jerusalem of shedding "the blood of the righteous" (Lamentations 4:13). Inasmuch as Jesus uses the present tense of the verb "kills," he also accuses Jerusalem of future killings.

Shortly, Jerusalem will kill Jesus, a prophet—indeed, more than a prophet. Jerusalem would later stone Stephen, an early follower of Jesus (Acts 7:58). The verb usually translated "send" (*apostello*) is related to the noun translated "apostle." An apostle was someone who was "sent" by Jesus. King Herod had the apostle James, who was sent by Jesus, executed and "saw that it pleased the Jews" (Acts 12:1-3).

What Jesus wants

Jesus uses the image of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings to illustrate his desire to protect and nurture the "children" of Jerusalem—that is, its people. The words "how often" communicate the depth and persistence of his desire. If the people don't come under his wings, so to speak, they will be exposed to the wrath of their enemies the way chicks would be exposed to predators or to a barnyard fire.

Jesus literally "wants" to gather the people of Jerusalem, but the people of Jerusalem literally are not "wanting" to be gathered. They don't want to be protected from their enemies. They don't want to be nurtured. Indeed, by all appearances, they're gathering together, apart from Jesus and contrary to the will of God, to take up arms against their enemies. Jesus would later accuse the people of Jerusalem of turning the temple into a "den" of insurrectionists (Luke 19:46).¹

Jesus wants something for the people of Jerusalem, but he cannot force them to want what he wants. They want something that's bad for them, though of course they think it's good for them. Jesus wants something that's good for them, but they think it's bad for them.

Jesus doesn't force us to come to him; he invites us to come to him. Consider the imagery: the mother hen

doesn't chase after the chicks; she simply opens her wings with an invitation for them to come to her.

The temple is forsaken

The "house" that is forsaken is the temple. It is—or, more accurately, it was—God's house, but Jesus now calls it "your" house, not God's house.

When the temple was first built, God filled it with his glory, his visible presence. However, when the people abandoned him to worship other gods, he abandoned it, just as he said he would (1 Kings 9:6-9). The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of the departure of the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 10:18-19, 11:22-23). The Lord himself, through Jeremiah, said, "I have forsaken my house; / I have abandoned my heritage; / I have given the beloved of my soul / into the hands of her enemies" (Jeremiah 12:7). Jeremiah, speaking for Jerusalem, looking back at the destruction of the city, said "my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed" (Lamentations 1:16).

After the Babylonians destroyed the temple, it was rebuilt and embellished, but there is no evidence that the Lord ever filled it with his glory again. In any event, Jesus says that the house of the people is "forsaken"—forsaken, or abandoned, by God. Apart from the presence of Lord dwelling in the temple, it is just another building, and it is exposed, just like chicks that refuse to be gathered under the wings of their mother.

Later in the gospel of Luke, Jesus laments again over Jerusalem.

Jesus weeps

Luke 19:41-44:

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Jesus "saw" the city, but he sees more than walls and structures. Jesus sees into the hearts of its people. From

afar, Jesus had lamented that the people of Jerusalem were unwilling to come to him. Now, as the city comes into view, he weeps over it. Jeremiah likewise wept over Jerusalem: "my eyes flow with rivers of tears / because of the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lamentations 3:48).

Jesus sees that the people of Jerusalem are ignorant of "the things that make for peace." He wishes desperately that they had known the things that make for peace. If they had, this would be a different kind of day, even for the people of Israel, who had been so resistant to God and his ways. As it is, they have been so resistant for so long that there's no going back.

Sometimes, when opposition to God and his ways reaches a certain point, God cooperates with such opposition: he gives people what they want. Such seems to be the case as Jesus approaches Jerusalem: the things that make for peace "have been hidden" from the eyes of Israel—apparently, hidden by God. Satan also has "blinded the minds of the unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The things that make for peace

So, what is "peace?" Peace first of all is peace with God and second of all peace with others, insofar as peace with others is possible.

What are "the things that make for peace"? Jesus uses the same words in Luke 14:32, where he speaks of a king who asks for "terms of peace" (Luke 14:32). The things that make for peace with God and peace with others, or the terms of peace, begin with forsaking self-rule and submitting to the rule of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Jesus laments that Jerusalem has not "known" the things that make for peace and he says that Jerusalem did not "know" the time of its visitation—that is, his coming to it as its king.² When you submit to the rule of Jesus, you let him gather you the way a mother hen gathers her chicks.

Days of war and destruction

Because Jerusalem did not know this "day" the things that make for peace, Jesus announces that "days" will come upon it. These days will not be days of peace but days of war and destruction.

Jerusalem's enemies, Jesus says, will destroy both it and its people, whom he calls "your children."

Remember, when Jesus spoke earlier of Jerusalem, he said he wanted to gather “your children” to protect them from their enemies. Because they were unwilling to be gathered under his wings, their enemies will set up a barricade around Jerusalem, surround the city, hem it in on every side, and tear it down to the ground, leaving not one stone upon another.

Likewise, Jeremiah, in consideration of the destruction of Jerusalem, said, “Her gates have sunk into the ground,” and, “The holy stones lie scattered / at the head of every street.” Jeremiah also said of the Lord, “[H]e has besieged and enveloped me” and, “He has walled me about so that I cannot escape.” He observed, “[P]anic and pitfall have come upon us, / devastation and destruction.” (Lamentations 2:9; 3:5, 7, 47; 4:1)

The time of visitation

When a king came to a city, it was sometimes called a “visitation.” Likewise, when God acted in a decisive way, it was said to be a “visitation” (Genesis 50:24, Isaiah 29:6).

At the birth of John the Baptist, whose coming anticipated the coming of Christ, Zacharias, John’s father, proclaimed, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, / for he has visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68). When Jesus raised a man from the dead, observers proclaimed, “God has visited his people” (Luke 7:16).

Alas, when Christ the King comes to Jerusalem, the city where Israel’s kings were enthroned, it does not recognize the time of its visitation because it does not recognize him as its king.

Blinded by power

Why did Jerusalem fail to recognize the things that make for peace? Why did it fail to recognize the time of its visitation?

On the one hand, Jewish nationalists such as the Pharisees want a king who will make war with their enemies, their Roman occupiers. Jesus was a different kind of king. On the other hand, Jewish collaborators such as the Sadducees, who are in bed with the Romans, don’t want any upstarts disturbing the fragile peace they enjoy with their occupiers. Jesus was an upstart.

Neither the nationalists nor the collaborators sense any need for peace with God, inasmuch as that they assume they are already in possession of it. Both nationalists and collaborators were blinded by the desire

for earthly power. Likewise, the desire for earthly power blinds many people today to the truth of who Jesus is and what he is doing.

Jerusalem, won over by the nationalists, would take up arms against Rome. As God’s judgment for rejecting Jesus, but also as a natural consequence of its power-hungry ways, Jerusalem would be destroyed by its enemies. Indeed, in fulfillment of Jesus’ words, the Romans would draw near to Jerusalem and lay waste to it in 70 A.D.—not exactly the kind of visitation the city was hoping for.

Scholar N.T. Wright explains: “Jesus’ contemporaries for the most part were not wanting peace They wanted an all-out war that would bring God’s justice swiftly to their aid and get rid of their enemies once and for all Rome’s punishment for rebel subjects would be the direct result of God’s people turning away from God’s way of peace.”³

When Jesus’ words came to pass, an observer could have then looked on Jerusalem and uttered Jeremiah’s words in the first verse of the book of Lamentations, “How lonely sits the city / that was full of people!”

I can’t help but wonder if Jesus weeps today over the church in the United States, which in many ways is blinded by power, either by acquiring power or keeping power, so that it does not see who Jesus is and what he is doing.

What does Jesus want?

What do you want? Perhaps you want to be wanted.

What does Jesus want? He wants you! He wants to protect you, not least from the wrath of God, and he wants to nurture you in the love of God—the way a mother hen protects and nurtures her chicks.

Moreover, Jesus’ desire for you is not fleeting, like some momentary infatuation he forgets about in a few days. No, his desire for you is deep and persistent: “how often” he wants to gather you. He never stops wanting you.

How do you know people want you? When they invite you and welcome you. Again, consider the imagery: the mother hen invites, with her wings outstretched, and she welcomes, closing her wings around her chicks and holding them close to her.

Consider also Jesus' invitations in the gospels:

—“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

—“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38).

Jesus wants you.

A little suspicious

You want to be wanted. Then again, you might be a little suspicious of being wanted. Can you trust the person who wants you? More than a few people have been wanted, even invited and welcomed, only to be abused and discarded. Perhaps you're one of them. You may have good reason to be suspicious when you hear the words, “Come to me.”

Aldonza, a kitchen maid in the musical *Man of La Mancha*, sings,

*One pair of arms is like another
I don't know why or who's to blame,
I'll go with you or with your brother
It's all the same, it's all the same.*

*So do not talk to me of love,
I'm not a fool with starry eyes,
Just put your money in my hand,
And you will get what money buys!*

*When I am dead no man will miss me
For life's a cruel and dirty game
So you can curse or you can kiss me
It's all the same, it's all the same*

*Oh, I have seen too many beds,
But I have known too little rest,
And I have loved too many men
With hatred burning in my breast.⁴*

To say the least, Aldonza has learned to be suspicious of anyone who says something like, “I want you,” or, “Come to me.”

Love that conquers the world

If you're suspicious, imagine this:

You know a group of people hates you. You know they want to kill you. You know they *will* kill you. When they kill you, they will take a long time doing it because they want to see you suffer. When they kill you, they will strip you naked. When they kill you, they will do so publicly in order to expose you to open shame. When they kill you, they will mock you.

What are you feeling about those people who are about to kill you?

Now, think about this:

Jesus didn't have to imagine such a scenario; he lived it. Not surprisingly, knowing what people would do to him, he wept. But why did he weep? Surprisingly, shockingly, he wept not for himself but for those who were going to kill him. Hear these words again: “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it . . .” Who does that?

This is the love that conquers the world. This is the love that conquers your suspicions.

In the end, Aldonza is won over by the impossible love of the Christ figure, Don Quixote, the Man of La Mancha.

Wakeup call

Jesus wants you. Now, seeing into Jesus' heart and seeing his tears, do you want Jesus? Do you want him to protect and nurture you?

How are we to understand this kind of love? Brennan Manning at one moment came about as close anyone. He lived in a cave by himself for seven months, having his meals lowered down to him by rope each day. He woke up at 2 a.m. each day to meet with God.

On one particular morning, he sensed Jesus saying this to him: “For love of you I left my Father's side. I came to you who ran from me, fled from me, who did not want to hear my name. For love of you I was covered with spit, punched, beaten and affixed to the cross of wood.”

Manning says, “I realized that no man has ever loved me and no one ever could love me as he did. I went out of the cave, stood on the precipice and shouted in the darkness, ‘Jesus, are you crazy? Are you out of your mind to have loved me so much?’”⁵

When you feel unwanted because a man or woman doesn't want you, because an employer doesn't want you, because a school doesn't want you, or because of some other reason, consider this: the Son of God wants you.

Come to Jesus

If you have not yet come to Jesus, can you hear him call to you today?

The words of Jesus include a warning. The devastation that Jerusalem suffered first in 586 B.C. and second in 70 A.D. is a harbinger of even worse things to come for those who refuse Jesus' offer of salvation.

Brian Morgan, a pastor at Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino, comments:

I believe Jesus emphasized the severity of this tribulation because he wanted every generation to feel the weight of their choices as exemplary of what lay in store for those who refused the gospel. Being in hell will be like being held captive in a city under siege, shut up in a sealed tomb inside a community that devours one another—surrounded by people, yet totally alone.⁶

In Jesus' day, the people of Jerusalem had been so resistant for so long that they had reached the point of no return. Some day, if you resist Jesus for long enough, you may reach that point too.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts . . ." (Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7). "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Today is the time of your visitation.

Forsake self-rule and come to Jesus.

Have you ever come across someone who makes you say to yourself, "I'd like to know that person?" If you came across a man who weeps for those who are about to torture him to death, wouldn't you like to know him? Here's the amazing thing: he wants to know you. Desperately. Jesus is calling you. He's inviting you. He'll welcome you.

Another visitation

Jeremiah wept for Jerusalem, but he couldn't die for

Jerusalem. For that you need the sinless Son of God, and there's only been one of those.

The days that Jesus said would come upon Jerusalem came upon him. Indeed, if he told Jerusalem, "Behold, your house is forsaken," later he would cry out to God, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) On the cross, Jesus suffered for the sins not only of Jerusalem but also the sins of the whole world. Thus, he gathers us under his wings, protecting us from the wrath of God and nurturing us in the love of God.

Turns out that what you want and what Jesus wants have much to do with each other. You want to be wanted, and Jesus wants you. And when you come to him, you satisfy his desires. Think about that: when you come to Jesus, you satisfy the Son of God. You and Jesus: it's a match made in heaven.

Jesus lamented because Jerusalem did not recognize the time of its visitation. There will be another visitation. Jesus will come again, and all those who believe in him will enjoy him in the new and eternal creation. Is there hope for this broken world? Indeed there is!

"My hope is built on nothing less / Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame / But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Endnotes

1. The Greek word translated "robbers" (*lestēs*) in Luke 19:46 would be better translated "insurrectionists." Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, applied the word to Jewish insurrectionists who took up arms against Rome. The word was used of Barabbas, who was sentenced to crucifixion for being an insurrectionist (John 18:40, Luke 23:18-19). Mark also identifies each of the men crucified next to Jesus as a *lestēs* (Mark 15:27). The Romans crucified not robbers but rebels.
2. See Luke 1:79, 2:14, 3:29, 7:50, 8:48, 10:5-6, 19:38, 24:36; Romans 5:1; Romans 12:14-18; Ephesians 2:14-16.
3. Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 121-22.
4. Mitch, Mitch, 1928-2014. *Man Of La Mancha: A Musical Play* / Lyrics by Joe Darion ; Music by Mitch Leigh (New York :Kapp, 1965.)
5. Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books), 40.
6. Brian Morgan, "The End of Labor" (Cupertino, Calif.: Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino, Catalogue No. 1138, Dec. 5, 1999).