



Lamenting Prayers

Prayer of Tears

Job said that his eyes “poured out tears to God” (Job 16:20). This kind of prayer involves weeping from a deep place in one’s soul. It produces tremendous release. “May those who sow in tears, reap with shouts of joy” (Psalm 126:5).

Prayer of the Forsaken

Praying when you feel alone, desperate, or separated from the love of God. You pray even though you feel rejected, abandoned, or in despair, and yet, you bring your honest frustrations, complaints, or anger to the Lord. Psalm 22 is an example of this kind of prayer.

About the photo:

Story, William Wetmore, 1819-1895. *Angel of Grief*, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54142> [retrieved March 9, 2011].

“Angel of Grief” was carved in 1894 by William Wetmore Story and serves as a headstone for him and his wife, Emelyn, in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Story was an American sculptor who studied and lived in Italy to help him with commissions he was receiving in the US.

The angel portrayed despairs over a tomb; her posture and emotion reflect the sentiments of the Lamentations text as it is applied to the death of Jesus. The Lamentations passage expresses affliction and darkness, but also recognizes hope in the Lord. Holy Saturday is a significant moment, one in which the world looks bleak and hope disappears. Jesus’ disciples spent this day in great fear and grief, because their master was dead. They had forgotten his promise to rise again on the third day, and they mourned their loss while fearing for their own lives. These were their darkest hours as they questioned all that they had seen and heard, failing to see how the Lord’s mercies would come in the morning.

Christians today celebrate the resurrection far more than they recognize Christ’s suffering, but we must go through the darkness of Holy Saturday before arriving at Easter. We must encounter and deal with loss and death before we can celebrate life. It is in these moments when all hope seems to be lost that we acknowledge our own need for the Savior, and that recognition makes Easter morning that much sweeter. This angel is a memorial to the dead, and its weeping honors both the death and the life of Emelyn Story. The angel weeps like William wept for his wife, like the disciples and angels wept for Christ, and like we weep for the grace given to us all on Easter morning. ~ Maggie Jarrell

What Is A Prayer of Lament?

--Excerpted from Rachel's Cry: *Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* by Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L Migliore

"According to biblical scholars, the psalm of lament has a definite structure with several elements: the opening address, the complaint, the confession of trust, the petition for help, and the vow of praise. While not all of these elements are found in every lament psalm, they are all present in Psalm 22, which has been aptly described as the lament psalm par excellence."

Element of a Lament	Psalm 22	You Try Write Your Lament Here
Address:	"My God my God... (22:1a)	
Complaint:	"Why have you forsaken me? Why are you in so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?" (22:1b)	
Confession of Trust:	"Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them." (22:3-4)	
Petition:	"Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help." (22:11)	
Vow of Praise:	"From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me. I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." (22:21 a-22).	

"While analysis of its structure is illuminating, even more important is the question of what is going on theologically and spiritually in the lament prayer. [Walter] Brueggemann finds three salient elements in these prayers (1) Israel complains of the incongruity between the promises of Yahweh and lived experience; (2) In voicing its complaint and calling on Yahweh to respond, Israel takes the initiative in the covenantal relationship; and (3) Israel's complaints often, though not always, move Yahweh to answer and save." (p 27)"

A Modern Lament

Lament Psalm Forty-Eight

By Ann Weems from her book *Psalms of Lament*

I am depressed, O God.
 I see no end to this cycle of sadness.
 People tell me: "Everything will be all right,"
 But it isn't, and it won't be.
 They quote Paul to me:
 "All things work together for good for those who love
 God."
 Don't I love you?
 Wasn't I brought up in your holy house,
 O God?
 Didn't I memorize your words and sing hymns to you?
 Don't I bow down to you?

Isn't that what I'm doing now?
 No one can tell me any good can come from this moment!
 Let them have their say if it makes them feel better!
 But I don't want to hear it!
 I know what I've been through.
 I know what it is to have death walk the halls of my home.
 What has happened can't be undone.
 What is done cannot be prettied up.
 But you, O God, can stop the aftershocks.
 O God, tear through the night
 To rescue the one you have left too long.
 Help me, O God,
 Out of this tomb of pain.