

Week 2 - Psalm 13: Praying our Lament

1. CONTEXT:

A quick look back: Spend a few minutes reviewing the big picture of Psalms from Week One. What kind of literature is the book of Psalms? Who is one of the primary authors? What is the book's main purpose? Where are we in the large story of Scripture? What have been some of the main themes or learnings from the past weeks.

Today's passage: Psalm 13 is a psalm of lament. It is a psalm that cries out to a God that the writer does not understand. Why is God allowing this pain?

As we learn about the life of David in chapel on Wednesdays, we will discover that he had a really miserable season. King Saul saw him as a threat and chased him, trying to kill him. That's the plot of 1 Samuel. David spends a lot of time in the wilderness, trying to find safety. He has to sneak around, make friends with Philistines, and can't go home because there are spies looking for him. We can imagine that Psalm 13 came out of that season in David's life.

2. CONTENT:

Read Psalm 13 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, C, or D) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group and share your observations, writing them on a board or a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together and spend time sharing with each other what you drew and why.

Option C. Lectio Divina: Scripture is read four times, pausing after each reading:

1: HEAR the passage.

2: MEDITATE on the passage in the silence that follows.

3: IDENTIFY a word or phrase that stands out to you from the reading (leader may ask group to speak this out loud after the 3rd reading, or to share it as a group after the 4th reading)

4: REST in the presence of God.

Take time to share your reflections with each other as a group.

Option D. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. Notice that the first part of the Psalm is a description of David's heartache.
 - What words does David use to articulate his deep heartache and distress?
 - Why do you think David feels safe enough to voice these things to God?
 - What different people/groups are included in David's "How long?"
2. Notice that there is a shift at the end of the Psalm, which is typical of lament psalms.
 - Where does this shift occur? What word starts the change?
 - What things does David name as truths of God that he can cling to?
 - Does David appear to move quickly or easily from lament to trust? What do you think allows him to do that?

3. APPLICATION:

No matter what method you used for content, spend some time talking about what this passage might mean to us now. Here are some questions to help guide this discussion. Feel free to use several or to just focus on one or two.

Psalm 13 (like all of the 42 psalms of lament) teaches us that it is okay—even welcome—to cry out to God.

- One of the phrases David repeats in this Psalm is “How long?” as He wonders if God really sees him in his distress. When have you had thoughts like this?
- What were you taught about crying out to God in your home/church/school context, and how does that impact your prayer life?
- What do the lament psalms teach us about our relationship with God? What difference does this make for us?
- Does our culture at large regularly talk about/explore/express lament? How about our faith communities? If so, what does that look like?
- What are some things happening right now in our world, on this campus, in your life- that may need to be cried out to God in lament?
- What are some truths/attributes about God that you cling to in times of lament?

4. PRAYER:

Close your time together in prayer.

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your “wonderings” from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Address God in prayer using the attributes people shared in the application section.
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:
What a gift it is, God, that we can cry out to you. Thank you for preserving these psalms of lament for generations, so that all can know that a relationship with you can include our deep sorrows. Today, we pray for your mercy in the sorrows of our lives (include things named by the group; climate change; political turmoil; personal disappointments; local/national/international tragedies; etc.). Help us to trust you, even when things are hard. May we always rejoice in your salvation, which is our through Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.