

Sermon for 5 October 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore, Maryland 21214

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost/World Communion Sunday

Scriptures: Lamentations 1:1-6; Psalter: 852 (Psalm 137); 2 Timothy 1 :1-14; Luke 17:5-10

Sermon : Although not written by the prophet Jeremiah, it is fitting that a reading from this book is included in our study of Jeremiah, since it deals with the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of its population into foreign lands.

I quote from the commentary: "Rituals of mourning and funeral songs are essential for the survival and well-being of both individuals and communities. If grief, whether for death or disaster, is not expressed, it will be repressed and continue to produce pain, depression, and anger....And in the process we can lift up the community's responsibility for such disaster to one another and to God."

The psalm goes further. Again quoting the commentary, "Verse 9 is the infamous text that declares a blessing on the one that would spread the brains of Babylonian babies on the rocks: 'A blessing on him who seizes your babies and dashes them against the rocks!'" Again quoting, "modern psychology and ageless common sense stress the need to let go with our feelings, to verbalize our pain and grief. Grief and sorrow that go unspoken may break the heart that seals them in and hugs them tight."

I really cannot say it better. We come to church to face life, not to run from it. "We too might find in these sad songs the words to express our own pain over community disasters, whether on the level of the congregation, the neighborhood, the nation, or the whole world. And in the process we can lift up the community's responsibility for such disaster to one another and to God." And finally, "Tears are as normal a part of life as laughter and joy. When the occasion calls for tears, we should let them flow. The time to sit by the waters of Babylon and weep comes to everyone. Our prayers, when the tears flow, can renew our hope and preserve our faith."

As you can see, there's no time to review the lessons from 1 Timothy and the Gospel of Luke! That happens when we face Scriptures as stark as our times are. Promise yourselves you'll work on them this week.. Remember there's no modern equivalent to the master/slave example Jesus cites, except between us and him. What he says goes, whether we've worked all day or just got started. Again quoting the commentary, "The rather simple thrust of the story is that the slave's time and labor belong to the master." All our time belongs to Jesus.

Now I think we'd better say a prayer: (Extempore)

Amen.