

**A Season of Lament and Prayer  
for Racial Peace, Healing,  
Justice, and Love**

**Risen Hope Church  
September 19-21**

## General Schedule

### Wednesday September 19

- Morning Prayer in the Church Office, 7:00-8:00am
- Afternoon Prayer in the Church Office, 4:00-5:00pm

### Thursday September 20

- Morning Prayer in the Church Office, 7:00-8:00am
- Afternoon Prayer in the Church Office, 4:00-5:00pm
- Thursday Community Groups meet
- Evening Prayer at the Shoreys Home (or other homes), 7:00-8:00pm
  - Let Tim and Gayline know if you are going to join them
  - Feel free to open your own home and invite people in

### Friday Septmeber 21

- Morning Prayer in the Church Office, 7:00-8:00am
- Prayer and Praise Gathering in the Church's McBurney Chapel, 7:00-8:30pm

**We encourage each in our congregation to use (perhaps even to print out a copy of this complete 25-page Prayer and Fasting Guide to help focus united prayer and care in these days.**

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

During this church-wide “More of God”<sup>2</sup> Fast and Prayer event, we encourage whoever can to fast for a meal or a day or more. Others may choose to “fast” from TV, the Internet, or other entertainment during these days. This is to free up time and focus for prayer, that God might give us more of his grace, help, and strength in the face of ongoing injustice and inequity in our homes, community, nation, and world.

Injustice—both very real and deeply felt—is a family issue for us in Risen Hope. All of us have experienced it. But some right here in our own little church family have faced racial bigotry and imposed disadvantage so many times that they do not know life without it. We have moms and dads who need, with terror, to have “the talk” with their children (if you don’t know what the “talk” is, ask around a bit). There are those who need to overcome decades in which they have been treated as and believed to be, inferior. There are those whose moms worked 80 hours a week to survive because their dads weren’t there—often for reasons that were unjust. There are those who are profiled so often it has become their norm. There are the effects of fatherlessness—at least many, many times resulting from systemic problems in our culture that have disadvantaged the minority and the poor. There are those who genuinely (and with reason) feel they cannot trust culture or politicians or police or people in power. There are those who cannot walk the streets at night without fearing that someone will call the police either out of suspicion that they’re “up to something” or in order simply to weaponize the police against them. Our brothers and sisters weep often. They tremble in real fear. They feel with real emotion that their place in our world is a vulnerable one. They have so many hard stories to tell that it would feel volumes to record them all.

We have called this fast to join the lament of our brothers and sisters in Jesus. We do not pretend to understand it all, or to get it. But we can try, and we can cry. This is what will unite us in these days.

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<sup>1</sup> While fasting is voluntary, we certainly hope that many of our Risen Hope family will fast and pray as and where they are able throughout these three days, and will use this guide to facilitate their personal and congregational experience with God and with one another.

<sup>2</sup> We hold two More of God fasts each year in which we invite our Risen Hope family to join in prayer for a greater experience of the mercy, love, and power of God.

## Wednesday, September 19

### Reading

#### Exile and Lament: Part One

(by Tim Shorey)

*“Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. **Nothing shall be left**, says the LORD.*

*And some of your own sons, who will come from you,  
whom you will father, shall be taken away,  
and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”*  
(Isaiah 39:5-7)

*“By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.  
On the willows there we hung up our lyres.”*  
(Psalm 137:1, 2)

### Exile

Isaiah 40 is comfort, solace, and hope for hurting and weeping people just like us—including those among us who have lived long on the wrong end of injustice and oppression. I encourage you to pause and read the whole chapter now (starting in Isaiah 39:5).

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Now that you have read our Scripture text, it helps to notice that Isaiah 39:5-7 provides historical context for Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40 proclaims God for his people’s comfort because Isaiah 39 predicted ruin for his people’s sins. Their world was in moral meltdown, filled with international Babylon-caused evil, despotic oppression, grave injustice, and unspeakable sin.

The events foretold in Isaiah 39 were fulfilled some time later. You can read about them in 2 Chronicles 36:5-21. Following a two-year siege, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, broke through Israel’s Jerusalem defenses to ravage and savage the land. This is the warfare of which Isaiah 40:2 speaks. The Hebrew word speaks of servitude, slavery, hardship, and oppressive sorrow. Israel was in an unparalleled season of troubles.

#### *Nothing Shall Be Left*

Israel was in *exile*. Like many in our Risen Hope Church family, I’ve gone through seasons of enormous grieving loss in my life but I’ve never experienced what Israel did. For while I’ve lost

much, I cannot even begin to say: *nothing is left* (39:6). In Israel's case, Babylon came. Babylon took. Babylon torched. Babylon enslaved. Babylon banished. Babylon left nothing behind.

*Exile* must be nearly the worst possible affliction anywhere on the spectrum of human sorrow. How can it get worse? Exile takes everything. When exile's dust settles, nothing but dust remains. Israel's stark, bleak exile involved the destruction of homes, the pillaging of possessions, the loss of land and jobs, the obliteration of familiar institutions, the ripping up of cultural and traditional roots, the raping of daughters and wives, the rending of families, the relocation of a population, the loss of family and national identity, an enslavement of the able-bodied, and an utter loss of freedom—all at the hands of a Hitler-like despot. And there was no hope of restoration of any of the above in the people's lifetime. It cannot get much worse than that.

Even though things are better today than they were in the days of American slavery or the Jim Crow south we have brothers and sisters who look back over 400 years and see a cultural and life experience that mirrors Israel's pretty closely. For many of our black brothers and sisters, it can feel like a 400-year-long exile. And while the conditions of this exile may be improved, it isn't over.

### *By the Waters of Babylon*

God wants to comfort his people. And his call to comfort his people (in Isaiah 40:1, 2) signals that God sees and validates our sorrow. He doesn't rebuke grief; he comforts it. God feels our pain and wants to heal us. We Christians have not always been so kind. A distorted view of Christian hope has misled many into thinking that grief amounts to unbelief. We see others' tears and are tempted to say, "Get over it". God looks at others' tears and says, "Let me be your comfort".

Isaiah's prophecy shows us it's okay to grieve: the 20 *woes*, *ahs*, and *alases* seasoning Isaiah's prophecies register the deep pain of a grieving saint. The fact that the coming perfect Savior is called a "man of sorrows...acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) shows that even a sinless Person can mourn. Isaiah tells us that even God's Spirit sometimes grieves (Isaiah 63:10). God is a weeping God.

Exiled Israelites sat beside the waters of Babylon and wept (Psalm 137:1-6). There was no song in their hearts. They just wanted to cry. Psalm 137 affirms their grief by memorializing it in the book of *Psalms*, the inspired hymnbook of the saints. And that psalm is not alone in its sorrowful theme. It may surprise you to learn that fully a third of the 150 psalms in our Bible can be described as "laments". They are wails of sorrow.

Remember too that Jeremiah's prophecy—written during Israel's exile—is far from a happy read, as his nickname, "the weeping prophet" suggests. Finally, a whole book of the Bible is devoted to the laments of exiled Israel (*Lamentations*).

### *It Is Okay for Christians to Cry*

Many Christians discount all these expressions of grief, and condemn grieving as a denial of Christian hope. They misread 1 Thessalonians 4:13, which says we are “not to grieve as others who have no hope” as a repudiation of grief. But Paul’s point is not that we are not to grieve. His point is that we are not to grieve *as others* grieve. That is, ours is not to be a *hopeless* grief.

That explains why Paul “groaned” over life in a fallen world (Romans 8:23) even though he knew that all our sorrows work out for our good (Romans 8:28). It explains why he would have felt “sorrow upon sorrow” if Epaphroditus had died (Philippians 2:27). It explains why the early church sent up “great lamentation” when Stephen was martyred (Acts 8:2). And it explains how perfected people in heaven right now are plaintively and sadly crying for God to make all things right (Revelation 6:9, 10).

Think on these things. And brother or sister: if there is stuff in your life that makes you feel like crying, don’t hold back. And as you hear the stories of brothers and sisters in Christ—perhaps stories of alienation or abuse or prejudice or disadvantage or bigotry or disrespect or guilt—make sure to weep with them. Let us prepare our hearts in these days to raise a holy hope-filled lament over a world profoundly broken.

## **7:00-8:00am—Wednesday Morning Prayer**

(in church office or wherever people choose)

**Scripture Reading of Lament:** Psalm 6:1-10

**Psalm of Lament:** *“O Lord, Do Not Be Angry?”* (Psalm 6; Revelation 6:10; if this does not describe your state of heart, sing it in solidarity with those whom it does describe)<sup>3</sup>

Tune: *“O Sacred Head Now Wounded”*

1. O LORD do be not angry, nor your displeasure vent;  
Be gracious in your mercy for we are sorely spent;  
We, in our trouble languish; o heal the weary soul!  
Down in our bones we anguish; how long ‘til you make whole?
2. O LORD return, deliver, and save in steadfast love;  
Lest we cannot remember, or praise your name above  
How weary is our moaning, we flood our bed with tears!  
How long will we be groaning, with endless wasting fears?
3. All evil-doers leave us, the LORD has heard our tears;  
And he will soon receive us, our cries have reached his ears;  
All enemies will vanish and soon will bear their blame;  
He will the wicked banish and put them all to shame.
4. Lord Jesus come to rescue from all our woe and pain!  
How long o LORD until you avenge the wrongly slain?  
O sovereign LORD most holy whose word is ever true,  
We trust your promise fully, and wait in hope for you.

**Scripture Reading of Solidarity in Love:** Romans 12:9-18

**Prayer Focus:**

- Pray that many Risen Hope members will join in prayer these days
- Pray for grace to initiate relationships across lines that divide—and to pursue them without quitting
- Pray for God to give us more Holy Spirit love to enable us to hear and empathize with those who feel oppressed and mistreated—even when we might disagree
- Pray for a heart that is not dismissive, but is willing to listen, learn, lament, and love; to weep with those who weep
- Pray that this fasting season will bless and comfort those whose hearts need it most

**Scripture Reading of Hope:** Revelation 21:1-5

**Closing Song of Hope:** *Amazing Grace*

1. Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now am found  
T’was blind but now I see

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<sup>3</sup> ©2018, Tim Shorey

2. T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear  
And Grace, my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares  
We have already come.  
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far  
And grace will lead us home,
4. When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun  
We've no less days to sing his praise  
Than when we first begun.

**4:00-5:00pm—Afternoon Prayer**  
(in church office or wherever you are)

## **Wednesday Evening Prayer:**

(for individuals, families, or volunteer gatherings)

**Scripture Reading of Lament:** Luke 18:1-8

**Psalm of Lament:** *“O Lord, Do Not Be Angry?”* (Psalm 6; Revelation 6:10) (Words above)

**Scripture Reading of Solidarity in Love:** Romans 15:1-7, 13

**Prayer focus:**

- Pray for the goodness and knowledge needed to encourage others with hope—even when you do not understand
- Pray for oppressed people everywhere, whatever their ethnicity or color
- Pray for oppressed and persecuted Christians all over the world
- Pray for the unborn—those who are victims of the most tragic injustice in our world today—and for Amnion Pregnancy Center that serves families in our community.
- Pray for national civility and actual humble conversation at every level of our culture
- Pray for specific people in our Risen Hope family that you know have felt attacked or afraid in light of prejudice or politics—that they may feel peace and truly have peace.
- Pray for the under-educated, displaced, and disadvantaged in our community.

**Scripture Reading of Hope:** Isaiah 40:27-31

**Song of Hope:** *He Will Hold Me Fast*<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936BapRFHaQ>

1. “When I fear my faith will fail  
Christ will hold me fast  
When the tempter would prevail  
He will hold me fast  
I could never keep my hold  
Through life’s fearful path  
For my love is often cold  
He must hold me fast

Chorus:

He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
For my Savior loves me so  
He will hold me fast

2. Those He saves are His delight  
Christ will hold me fast  
Precious in His holy sight  
He will hold me fast

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<sup>4</sup> Ada Habershonne and Matt Merker

He'll not let my soul be lost  
His promises shall last  
Bought by Him at such a cost  
He will hold me fast  
CHORUS

3. For my life He bled and died  
Christ will hold me fast  
Justice has been satisfied  
He will hold me fast  
Raised with Him to endless life  
He will hold me fast  
Till our faith is turned to sight  
When he comes at last  
CHORUS

## Thursday, September 20

### Reading Exile and Lament: Part Two

#### Why Did Jesus Cry?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus cried and sobbed when his dear friend Lazarus died (John 11:35)? As the Lord arrived to be with Mary and Martha, he found them mourning, and he wept. John tells us that this weeping released strong emotion. In John 11:33 we see that “*he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.*” John’s terms are intense. “Deeply moved” translates Greek words describing an inner volatile emotional upheaval, a groaning of his soul. His emotions were so strong as to be near to, if not at a point of, weeping outrage<sup>5</sup> --probably directed at Satan, whom he had previously called him a *murderer from the beginning*.<sup>6</sup>

John’s other words, “greatly troubled” refer to a profound inner disturbance. Jesus was in a highly agitated state of emotion; his heart was a cauldron of distress, grief, and pain. But why? You may think it obvious; after all his friend just died. But didn’t Jesus know that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:11, 23, 34ff)? Surely he knew that God was in charge; right? Didn’t he know that he himself was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)? Didn’t he wield the power of life itself? If he knew all this, shouldn’t his hope for the future have quieted his weeping heart? And it didn’t. Instead he mourned. Do you wonder why?

It is because the situation was profoundly broken and sad, worthy of tears. And so, quite simply he chose to cry. I cannot think of any other reason for his wrenching emotions except that in this moment he simply chose to feel and free them. He paused to allow the lamentable sorrow and dreadful outrage of this world’s brokenness affect him. That he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead did not diminish the actual tragedy of Lazarus’ death. Death—and all that goes with it—is tragedy. It’s wrong. It’s pain. It’s separation. It’s an outrage. It’s a result of sin. It simply hurts.

Jesus chose to cry. His friends were sad and so he was too. He postponed the remedy, the theology, and the experience of resurrection long enough to feel what had happened and to share the grief. That he was about to raise his friend did not negate the appalling tragedy of what had happened to his friend. By choosing tears he showed that when the sad happens—in our lives or in others’—it is okay to feel sad, even if you know there’s a happy ending.

#### *Validating Grief*

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<sup>5</sup> D.A. Carson, *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*

<sup>6</sup> John 8:44

Severed relationships, childhood abuse, broken marriages, shattered dreams, fractured families, disappointed hopes, diseased loved ones, unrealized dreams, social injustice, racial oppression, tensions between black, brown, white, and blue, anti-Semitism, fatherless children—all these are real sorrows and valid griefs. We may and we *must* weep; and if others are weeping we may and must join them in their tears. It is certainly wonderful that truth helps to comfort hearts and give hope, but the fact that we have hope does not mean that we cannot mourn the broken, the battered and the burdensome of life.

I believe tears are a gift, a welcome release for our hurting hearts. Alone, with each other, in front of our kids, and with our friends, Gayline and I have cried more tears than we could ever count. And it has helped. We have felt free to cry ever since it occurred to us that God is the One who created tear ducts. If that isn't permission to cry, I don't know what is! God knows that most often: *Comfort starts with crying*. Jesus' words, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4), encourage mourning over sin, but they also free us to mourn sin's tragic effects in our sorrow-weary world.

### *Letting Ourselves Cry*

I emphasize this simply because a lot of us need a good cry. We have forgotten how to lament—and we have certainly forgotten how to lament with others. Listen to us sometimes. When our words are interrupted by a few tears we often say, "I'm sorry; I don't know why I'm crying!"

But friends: life hurts. You're allowed, even encouraged to cry. Please weep. And when others are weeping, join them (Romans 12:15). Lament is good; we need more of it—both to heal our wounded hearts *and* to line up our emotions with God's as he weeps over a world gone very wrong.

I'm convinced that churches don't lament enough. Weeping is a lost grace. We wear our smiles, paste a happy look on our face, post a grinning emoji alongside some clichéd Facebook meme—when all the while our hearts are utterly broken. This is why through the years I have tried to find ways to help people get real. One way was to put the lament psalms to music. I have matched sad psalms to sad tunes and had our congregation sing them (a couple of the Psalm-songs included in this prayer guide date back to those efforts). Singing laments was good for us. I would encourage you to do the same. Sometimes we need to be real and raw.

How real and raw are you in your relationship with the Father above? Perhaps by going back and singing yesterday morning's version of Psalm 6 or this morning's version of Psalm 137, you will find some freedom to remove the fake smile, and to feel your grief afresh.

## **7:00-8:00am—Thursday Morning Prayer**

(in church office, or wherever people are)

**Scripture Reading of Lament:** Lamentations 3:1-32

**Psalm of Lament:** *Down by the Waters:* Psalm 137<sup>7</sup>

(Tune: *Be Thou My Vision*)

1. Down by the waters of exile we wept  
Here we are captured, from Zion are kept  
We hang our harps, how silent the string  
Though captors mock us and tell us to sing.
  
2. How shall we sing a glad song to the Lord  
When neither freedom nor right is restored?  
We are a people in Babylon land;  
How can we sing here with harp in the hand?
  
3. Yet this our song in the dark of the night  
Remember Lord when they put us to flight  
O Lord repay, bring justice at last  
Into your hand Lord our rights are now cast.  
(Interlude)
  
4. Soon shall the waters of justice flow down  
Soon shall the King ride, wearing the Crown  
Soon shall the Lamb for sinners once slain  
Come for his people, and righteously reign.

**Scripture Reading of Love:** 1 Thessalonians 5:8-26

**Prayer Focus:**

- Pray for those who feel bound and as if there no longer is a song in their hearts
- Pray for the Lord's church that it will no longer be content as a segregated people of God
- Pray for those who believe that systems and structures—including the ones that are supposed to protect them—are against them
- Pray for the police that they will be safe as they do their job well—with justice toward all
- Pray for all our Risen Hope little children that they will learn each week and in our shared life that we all are one in Jesus.
- Pray for the King to come—riding his white horse of justice and peace

**Scripture Reading of Hope:** 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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<sup>7</sup> © 2018 Tim Shorey

**Song of Hope: Great Is Thy Faithfulness<sup>8</sup>**

<https://www.austinstoneworship.com/music/great-is-thy-faithfulness/>

1. Great is thy faithfulness of God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with thee  
Thou changest not thy compassions they fail not  
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

(CHORUS)

Great is thy faithfulness  
Great is thy faithfulness  
Great is thy faithfulness  
Lord unto me.

2. I could not love Thee, so blind and unfeeling;  
Covenant promises fell not to me.

Then without warning, desire, or deserving,  
I found my Treasure, my pleasure, in Thee.

(CHORUS)

3. I have no merit to woo or delight Thee,  
I have no wisdom or pow'rs to employ;  
Yet in thy mercy, how pleasing thou found me,  
This is Thy pleasure: that Thou art my joy.

(CHORUS)

4. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand besides.

(CHORUS)

**4:00-5:00pm—Afternoon Prayer: same as Morning Prayer**

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<sup>8</sup> © 1951 Thomas Chisholm (stanzas 1, 4), John Piper (stanzas 2, 3)

## **Thursday Evening Prayer**

(for individuals, families, Community Groups, or volunteer gatherings<sup>9</sup>)

**Scripture Reading of Lament:** Psalm 73:1-28

**Psalm of Lament and Comfort:** Psalm 131 (Tune: O Come, O Come, Immanuel)

1. O LORD, I guard my heart from lifted pride  
I do not let my eyes be raised too high  
I do not probe the mystery  
Of things too great and marvelous for me

Hope in the LORD, O Israel  
From this time forth and evermore.

2. But I have calmed and stilled my soul  
Like a weaned child with mother  
My soul within is fed, is full  
Well-nourished by Another

Hope in the LORD, o Israel  
From this time and evermore.  
(twice)

3. O LORD, keep us from lifted pride  
Don't let our eyes be raised too high  
Keep, lest we probe the mystery  
Of things we cannot know, or ever see

And be our Hope, Emmanuel  
From this time forth and evermore.

**Scripture Reading of Love:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Prayer Focus:**

- Pray that your home and family will become a safe place for oppressed and hurting people.
- Pray for courage to share with others the pain and fear of your own life experiences
- Pray that all your brothers and sisters will have grace to entrust the things they cannot understand into the hands of the One who can
- Pray that those who have known hurt and abuse will find freedom from fear, rage, or vengeance

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<sup>9</sup> The Shorey home is open for prayer from 7:00-8:00pm. Please let them know if you plan to join them.

- Pray for immigrants and refugees all over the world, that they might find safety and a home.
- Pray for the Countries from which Immigrants are Fleeing. Pray for an end of war and gang violence and for a new era of peace and stability in the countries of Syria, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, from which most of the families seeking asylum in the U.S. have fled.
- Pray for governmental leaders in each of these countries, that God would grant them wisdom as they navigate complex situations and that they would prioritize the wellbeing of those who are most vulnerable. Pray for the often under-resourced police who are responsible for the safety of the local communities in which they serve.
- Pray for local churches throughout these countries and for Christian ministries that holistically meet the needs of those who are vulnerable.

**Scripture Reading of Hope:** Romans 8:18-39

**Song of Hope:** *Before the Throne of God Above*

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ6sCc>

Before the throne of God above  
 I have a strong and perfect plea  
 A great High Priest whose name is love  
 Who ever lives and pleads for me  
 My name is graven on His hands  
 My name is written on His heart  
 I know that while in heav'n He stands  
 No tongue can bid me thence depart  
 No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair  
 And tells me of the guilt within  
 Upward I look and see Him there  
 Who made an end of all my sin  
 Because the sinless Savior died  
 My sinful soul is counted free  
 For God the Just is satisfied  
 To look on Him and pardon me  
 To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb  
 My perfect, spotless Righteousness  
 The great unchangeable I AM  
 The King of glory and of grace  
 One with Himself, I cannot die  
 My soul is purchased by His blood  
 My life is hid with Christ on high  
 With Christ my Savior and my God  
 With Christ my Savior and my God

## **Friday, September 21**

### **Reading Exile and Lament: Part Three**

#### *Learning to Lament*

Based on our earlier readings, we need to dig deeper into human sorrow—to feel our own, and to empathize more deeply with others'. Maybe we can't claim to have suffered as greatly as the Israelites of old, but that doesn't mean we haven't suffered. And it doesn't mean that we haven't suffered *greatly*. Some of us could create an arm's-length list of afflictions before I could count to 50. Our emotions run on a daily collision course with pain. Even if that is not you now, someday it will be. And for that day you will need to learn the grace of hopeful lament.

What does your sorrow list look like? Go ahead and write it down. This isn't an exercise in self-pity; it's a path to hope. God would never ask us to make believe we're not hurting. Biblical faith is poignantly real. It tells it like it is. That's what the book of *Psalms* is about; real faith, naked fear, raw pain, revived hope. Try to go there with God. Refuse to hide or pretend. Be authentically human before a Heavenly Father who can handle it.

Think about Israel's sufferings. Review the afflictions she bore. Then consider how many of them—at least in some measure—you have tasted. I can get you started. Do you know financial loss, job instability, runaway or wayward kids, splintered family, disease, racial injustice, police profiling, political and national evil, a loss of "the way things used to be", fire, storm, oppression, unfair treatment, evil bosses or neighbors or spouses or kids, guilt and shame over sin, regrets over the past? Then you know something of Israel's sorrow.

But go further. Think more deeply to gain an awareness of your real pain. Maybe you need to write your own lament, a simple prayer of grief. Try your hand and heart at it; it may do your soul some good. Use the space below to record your lament.

Keep this in minds as we consider Isaiah 39 and 40: unless you feel the freedom to admit the pain Israel felt in Isaiah 39, you will have little sense of need for the comfort Israel experienced in Isaiah 40. Pretend to be happy, and you will miss the chance to taste the very real and wonderful comfort of God. Unless you connect to Israel's sorrow, you will never connect to their hope.

#### *Bridging 39 and 40*

Israel's' story (in Isaiah 1-39) is a scandalous, sorry, sad tale of rebellion and affliction. It defies words, and nearly shatters hope. It's hard to imagine any human grief which they were *not* tasting. They were found everywhere on the spectrum of human loss—all at once. And this is

what provides contextual bridge into the comfort of Isaiah 40. It is into this vortex of human sorrow that God throws the Isaiah 40 life-vest of his comfort. Israel is tasting life at its very worst, and God meets them there.

Brother or sister in Christ, this same God is enough for you, too. If God can meet Israel in the midst of life's worst, he can meet you wherever you are. There is no sorrow so deep that God cannot meet you in it; no pain so great or trial so profound that there is not enough in God to see you through.

Corrie ten Boom, who heroically rescued many Jewish men, women, and children during the Nazi reign of terror suffered exile herself. Arrested and banished to a concentration camp where she suffered unspeakable trials, she found her joy refined, her hope sustained. In reflecting on the sorrows of our broken world she once penned these extraordinary words: *"Joy runs deeper than despair...[for] there is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still."*<sup>10</sup>

These words speak to all of us who, like Corrie and like Israel long before, find that the pit can get pretty deep after all. They remind us that God is deeper still. His loving care is vaster and deeper than any trial, regret, or loss, no matter how inexpressibly profound our painful depths. Isaiah 40 shows us that God is an ever flowing Fountain of grace open to all his people in all their sorrows. May we all—together with one heart of shared suffering and hope—drink deeply and be refreshed.

*Writing Your Lament:*

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<sup>10</sup> Corrie's story is told in her book, *The Hiding Place*.

## **7:00-8:00am—Friday Morning Prayer**

(in church office or wherever people are)

**Scripture Reading of Lament over Sin:** Psalm 51 (read aloud, whether alone or in unison with others)

Have mercy on us, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out our transgressions.  
Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,  
and cleanse us from our sin!  
For we know our transgressions,  
and our sin is ever before us.  
Against you, you only, have we sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.  
Behold, we were brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did our mothers conceive us.  
Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach us wisdom in the secret heart.  
Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean;  
wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow.  
Let us hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.  
Hide your face from our sins,  
and blot out all our iniquities.  
Create in us a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within us.  
Cast us not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.  
Restore to us the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold us with a willing spirit.  
Then we will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
Deliver us from bloodguiltiness, O God,  
O God of our salvation,  
and our tongues will sing aloud of your righteousness.  
O Lord, open our lips,  
and our mouths will declare your praise.  
For you will not delight in sacrifice, or we would give it;  
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
build up the walls of Jerusalem;  
then will you delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.”

**Song of Confession and Lament: *Shine into Our Night***<sup>11</sup>

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU2FLhNGpjl>**

We are not what we should be  
We haven't sought what we should seek  
We've seen Your glory, Lord, but looked away  
Our hearts are bent, our eyes are dim  
Our finest works are stained with sin  
And emptiness has shadowed all our ways

**CHORUS** Jesus Christ, shine into our night  
Drive our dark away  
Till Your glory fills our eyes  
Jesus Christ, shine into our night  
Bind us to Your cross, where we find life

Still we often go astray  
We chase the world, forget Your grace  
But You have never failed to bring us back  
Reveal the depths of what You've done  
The death You died, the vict'ry won  
You made a way for us to know Your love

**Scripture Reading of Love:** Isaiah 58:5-14 (read as a personal commitment to care for others in their grief and loss)

“Is not this the fast that [we] choose:  
to loose the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the straps of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?

**Is it not to share [our] bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into [our] house;  
when [we] see the naked, to cover him,  
and not to hide [ourselves] from [our] own flesh?**

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<sup>11</sup> Joel Sczebel

Then shall [our] light break forth like the dawn,  
and [our] healing shall spring up speedily;  
[our] righteousness shall go before [us];  
the glory of the Lord shall be [our] rear guard.

**Then [we] shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
[we] shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'  
If [we] take away the yoke from [our] midst,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,**

if [we] pour [ourselves] out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
then shall [our] light rise in the darkness  
and [our] gloom be as the noonday.

**And the Lord will guide [us] continually  
and satisfy [our] desire in scorched places  
and make [our] bones strong;  
and [we] shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters do not fail.**

**And [our] ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
[we] shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
[we] shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to dwell in.**

“If [we] turn back [our] foot from the Sabbath,  
from doing [our] pleasure on [his] holy day,  
and call the Sabbath a delight  
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;  
if [we] honor it, not going [our] own ways,  
or seeking [our] own pleasure, or talking idly;

**then [we] shall take delight in the Lord,  
and [he] will make [us] ride on the heights of the earth;  
[He] will feed [us] with the heritage of Jacob [our] father,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”**

**Amen and Amen.**

**Prayer Focus:**

- Pray to confess personal sins (and what may be our fathers'/mothers' sins) of partiality and prejudice
- Pray for God's forgiveness of our nation's enduring sins of injustice against the poor, the minority, and the needy.

- Pray for our national and church leaders that they may be instruments of peace
- Pray for a lifestyle that is a true fast—making the specifics of Isaiah 58 your requests
- Pray for the Witness of the Church.
- Pray that local churches throughout our country would speak up for vulnerable families in ways guided by biblical principles—and would be as concerned for the safety of innocent refugees as we are for our own safety and security (we may well and legitimately disagree on how to care for refugees and immigrants in a way that preserves national security, but we must agree that we should *care*.)
- Pray that the world would hear the Church speaking on behalf of vulnerable immigrant families and doing good works, so they may “give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16)

**Reading of Hope:** Revelation 19:1-10

**Song of Hope:** *God Over All*<sup>12</sup>

Link: <https://sovereigngracemusic.bandcamp.com/track/god-over-all>

God over all  
 Giver of life and health and breath  
 I want to sing of Your love  
 Came as a man  
 Humble, You died the sinner’s death  
 I want to sing of Your love

**CHORUS**

Your love has saved me  
 By Your grace I now draw near, and  
 Your love has set me  
 Free to glorify Your name  
 And I, I want to sing of Your love

I’ll never forget  
 That You have bought me with Your blood  
 I want to sing of Your love  
 In all I do  
 May Your great love be shining through  
 I want to sing of Your love

And on that day  
 When You come back to claim Your own  
 Yes, we will sing of Your love  
 Then we’ll bow down  
 Praise You forever at Your throne  
 Yes, we will sing of Your love

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<sup>12</sup> Devon Kauflin

CHORUS

**7:00pm—Friday Evening Solemn Assembly for Prayer and Hope**

(in the McBurney Chapel/DHUMC; No childcare available, though all are welcome)

**Scripture Reading of Confession and Lament:** Psalm 51 (see Friday AM guide)

**Psalm of Lament:** *“O Lord, Do Not Be Angry? (Psalm 6; Revelation 6:10)* (see Wednesday AM guide)

**Scripture Reading of Comfort:** Isaiah 40:1-31

**Singing Worship:**

*“Behold Our God”*<sup>13</sup>

1. Who has held the oceans in his hands?  
Who has numbered every grain of sand?  
Kings and nations tremble at His voice  
All creation rises to rejoice

CHORUS

Behold our God seated on His throne  
Come let us adore Him  
Behold our King, nothing can compare  
Come let us adore Him

2. Who has given counsel to the Lord?  
Who can question any of His Words?  
Who can teach the One who knows all things?  
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds?

CHORUS

3. Who has felt the nails upon His hands  
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man?  
God eternal humbled to the grave  
Jesus, Savior risen now to reign

*“He Will Hold Me Fast”* (see Wednesday evening guide)

**Scripture Responsive Reading of Love:** Isaiah 58:5-14 (see earlier page, congregation read the bold sections)

**Group Prayer Focus:**

- Pray for whatever is shared in your group or any of the requests throughout this guide
- Pray for ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts to feel
- Pray for those who fear for their children

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<sup>13</sup> Megan and Jonathan Baird, Stephen Altrogge

- Pray for those who feel rage against inequities and injustices that they may not be embittered
- Pray for our unity in diversity, our GRACE and Race Fellowship, our national crisis of uncivility and racial/ethnic tension.
- Pray for the comfort of others here this evening, and in our church—and for a living and abiding hope!
- Pray that no one of God’s children will ever feel separated from the love of their Father in heaven.

**Reading of Hope:** Romans 8:18-39

**Songs of Hope:** *It Is Well with My Soul*

1. When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
 When sorrows like sea billows roll  
 Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say  
 It is well, it is well, with my soul

CHORUS

It is well

With my soul

It is well, it is well with my soul

2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
 Let this blest assurance control,  
 That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
 And hath shed His own blood for my soul

CHORUS

3. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought  
 My sin, not in part but the whole,  
 Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul

CHORUS

4. And Lord haste the day when the faith shall be sight  
 The clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
 The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend  
 Even so, it is well with my soul.

It is well (it is well)

With my soul (with my soul)

It is well, it is well with my soul.

**Shared Benediction in Unison** (based on 2 Timothy 4:17, 18)

And now dear brothers and sisters in Jesus: may the Lord who loves you stand by you and strengthen you—and rescue you from the lion’s mouth. May he rescue you from every evil

deed and bring you safely into his eternal kingdom where his glory will be forever and ever.  
Amen.