

But Jeremiah keeps returning to me. His words, drenched in tears, refuse easy answers. He doesn't rush to mend, explain, or justify. He gives grief its own dignity. Could that be the way? Could worship itself be an act of lament?

I imagine standing before them and saying: Friends, today we will not fix or decide. We will not pretend to hold the whole truth. Instead, we will lament.

I see the shape of it: prayers not polished but raw, naming our sorrows, our divisions, the cries from Gaza, the wounds in our own town, the families torn apart by the issue we dare not name too quickly. We will let silence speak. We will let tears be testimony that injustice is intolerable, that suffering is real, that God has not abandoned us.

And in that lament, perhaps, we will find ourselves together. Not because we agree, but because we weep. Not because we have solutions, but because we dare to stand before God with broken hearts.

Jeremiah reminds me that lament is not despair. It is hope's shadow, a refusal to accept the world as it is. So I will risk it. I will craft prayers that cry: For the hurt of your people, O God, we are hurt. For the wounds of the world, we weep with you. Is there no balm in Gilead?

Perhaps this is how the church embodies honesty: not with answers, but with tears. And in those tears, God's own compassion flows among us.

### Your Response :

allow each person in the group to offer a sentence or two response to the reading. Then silently pray for each other and the diverse thoughts of the group

### Five-Minute Activity

#### Connecting with Preaching/Worship

#### Sharing Seeds for Sunday

- Break into pairs. Each person shares one concrete thought, image, or example from the readings that struck them.
- After three minutes, invite a few volunteers to voice these insights aloud (a sentence each).
- Collect these on a flip chart or shared document and pass them on to the preacher/worship leader as a gift from the group.
- You may wish to write your own pray of lament



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# HeartBeat

## Lament and Prayer

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> of September

Lectionary Reading:  
1 Timothy 2:1-7 and  
Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

### Opening Prayer

God of all peoples,  
You hold our joys and  
our sorrows, our leaders and  
our neighbours,  
our cries of lament and  
our prayers of hope.  
Be with us now as we listen  
to your Word.  
Stretch our imaginations,  
soften our hearts,  
and lead us into deeper  
compassion. Amen.

### Icebreaker

Invite each person to share:

- One person, group, or situation they have prayed for this week.
- If they haven't prayed, ask: who or what has been on your heart?

Keep this short - just a sentence or two from each person.

## Listening to the Texts

1. Read 1 Timothy 2:1–7 aloud, twice. After the first reading: pause for silence. After the second: ask everyone to notice a word or phrase that stood out. Share with a neighbour.
2. Read Jeremiah 8:18–9:1 aloud, twice. Repeat the same process: silence, then sharing a word or phrase.

## Wonderings (for group reflection)

- I wonder... what it means to pray “for everyone”- including those in power
- I wonder... when has prayer felt like resistance rather than conformity
- I wonder... what situations fill you with despair today
- I wonder... how does it change things to imagine God saying, “For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt”

## INPUT NOTES

### Lament

- Lament is not despair- it is grief spoken aloud in trust that God listens.
- It holds together honesty about pain and hope for change.
- In the Bible, lament is a form of prayer that refuses silence or resignation.

### Wonderings:

I wonder if you have had times of lament in your life or the life of your church .

### Prayer (1 Timothy 2:1–7)

- Prayer is presented in four forms: supplication, intercession, thanksgiving, petition. This shows breadth rather than one rigid pattern.
- To pray “for everyone” is radically inclusive- breaking boundaries of tribe, faith, and politics.
- Praying for rulers places them under God’s authority and scrutiny, not above it.

### Wonderings:

how might these thoughts shape your own pray pattern or that of your faith community

### Christ as Mediator

- Verse 5 stresses Christ’s humanity: “himself human.”
- This affirms solidarity- God meets us in our frailty and vulnerability, not from a distance.

### Wonderings

( private space and not for sharing in a group.) when has God met you in your vulnerability

### Note on the biblical texts

- The Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) are sometimes thought by scholars to be later letters, written in Paul’s tradition.

This doesn’t lessen their authority but reminds us they were shaped by early church struggles with order, prayer, and public witness.

- Jeremiah 8–9 sits in a section of poetic oracles. The language of tears may be the prophet’s own, or God’s, or both - the ambiguity blurs the line between divine and human grief.

### Definition of Lament in Worship

- Lament allows communities to speak truth about suffering rather than cover it over.
- It is a counter-cultural act in societies that demand optimism or silence.
- The psalms of lament, Jeremiah’s tears, and even Jesus’ cry on the cross show that lament is part of faithful prayer.

## GOING DEEPER

### Scaffolding Learning Together

- **Step 1: The Wide Embrace of Prayer (1 Timothy)**  
Explore together: Why might it be radical to pray for everyone? How does this challenge narrow or tribal understandings of prayer?
- **Step 2: The Role of Power (1 Timothy)**  
Discuss: What does it mean to pray for leaders today? How do we hold both critique and intercession in tension?
- **Step 3: Tears as Testimony (Jeremiah)**

Jeremiah’s lament gives space to grief rather than rushing to solutions. What might it look like for the church to embody this kind of honesty in worship?

- **Step 4: God’s Solidarity (Both Texts)**  
Bring the two readings together: In Timothy, God’s desire for all people. In Jeremiah, God’s solidarity with the wounded. How do these shape our vision of God’s love and justice?

### Pondering of a Worship Leader:

Read the following aloud. Give space for people to think about the words .

I sit at my desk, lectionary open, the readings circling in my mind like restless birds. 1 Timothy: pray for everyone, even kings. Jeremiah: my joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick.

This Sunday looms large. The issue in our community is raw, divisive. Some will come with placards of certainty hidden in their pockets, ready to unfurl. Others will arrive with silence and heavy hearts, carrying stories too fragile to share. And me- I am caught in the middle, asked to lead them into the presence of God.

What shape should worship take? A carefully reasoned sermon? A prophetic denunciation? A gentle pastoral balm? Each path feels partial, each risks alienating half the room.