

**Text: Lamentations 3:19-25 (Pew Bible, pg.816)**

**Title: “God’s Great Love”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Let’s open our Bibles to Lamentations 3:19. You’ll find it right after the book of Jeremiah in the OT. And as you’re turning I want to encourage you to plan to be part of our ministry team rally tonight. You’ll have an opportunity to learn about places to serve God and others here in our church. Details are in your worship folder. Before I read the text you need to know that Lamentations is a sad book, thus the name Lamentations. It is written by the prophet Jeremiah as he has watched the horrible destruction of his beloved city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with the destruction there was starvation and the loss of life. All this is due to Judah’s obstinate rebellion against the Lord over the years. So Jeremiah pours out his broken heart ... he laments ... on the pages of this short book. And yet out of this dark moment comes one of the most amazing confessions of faith in the entire Bible. Read Lamentations 3:19-25.

This is all about God’s great love. In spite of Israel’s rebellion and God’s judgment, Jeremiah can still see God’s mercy. If they had received what they deserved, they would have been completely destroyed, but there’s still hope. And so out of the darkness of this little book comes one of the most inspiring confessions of faith in the entire Bible. Imagine that ... a great confession of faith could emerge out of one of the darkest moments in the Bible. Jeremiah shows us how to walk through the dark days of life and emerge from them glorying in God’s great love.

### **1. THE WAY WE FEEL (Lamentations 3:19-20)**

**Lamentations 3:19 - I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.**

When Jeremiah uses those words “affliction,” “wandering,” “bitterness” and “gall.” He’s painting a picture of what the interior of his life felt like as he walked through these dark days with his people.

**Lamentations 3:20 - I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.**

In other words, “I keep thinking about it to the point that it causes despair. Those words “downcast within me” shows a soul that is weighed down; the word was sometimes used to describe depression.

So this is a picture of Jeremiah’s interior world ... a tangled mess of bad feelings and hurtful emotions. He is lonely, discouraged, heart-broken, dejected and rejected.

And as Jeremiah sat among the ashes and ruins of his burned out city, you may be sitting among the ashes of a broken marriage or a broken family, a devastating financial situation, or an overwhelming illness ... and our soul is in distress.

How are we supposed to manage ourselves when we’re in this condition? We’ve all been there. Some of us have dispositions that are prone to this; but all of us go through it at times. This is not the inner state of our souls that is pleasing to God because we are consumed with despair, fear and

anxiety. Obviously there's not much joy. So what do we do? We do what Jeremiah did. Out of the blackness of this tangled mess of negative emotions the Lord shows us ...

## **2. WHAT WE SHOULD THINK (Lamentations 3:21-23)**

There's a very clear determination in Jeremiah's mind that he will not permit himself to wallow in these destructive emotions. So what does he do? He refocuses his thinking.

### **Lamentations 3:21 - Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:**

Jeremiah was thinking wrongly, which caused his soul to be so weighed down. So he refocuses his thinking. And the reshaping of his thoughts causes him to have an immediate sense of hope. Hope is what sustains us and establishes us in the assurance that everything is going to be alright in the end.

What does Jeremiah think? He thinks about the things that are true about God, and about his relationship with God.

### **Lamentations 3:22 - Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.**

“great love” = the great Hebrew word *hesed*. It means loyal, undying love. It is the closest thing in the OT to the NT concept of *agape* love. That's the tenacity of God's love for you today.

“compassions” = “mercies” – By the way both words “love” and “compassion” are in the plural. They are multitude and multiplied ... multiple mercies.

In all the activities of God, even in His judgment, His love and mercies are never compromised. In fact...

### **Lamentations 3:23 - They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

They are new every morning, not because they run out at the end of a day and need to be renewed. His mercies are new every morning because they are reserved for the needs of that day. When you awaken each day, the Lord's mercies are already apportioned to you for every need you will have. The big question is will you trust in them? Will you consciously allow yourself to be sustained by them?

**ILLUSTRATION** – Remember God's provision of manna in the wilderness for His people. It was freshly baked for that day. They went out each morning and collected enough for that day.

In a moment, I have a little exercise for us to do, so let the Holy Spirit bring the mercies of God to your mind. I challenge you today to let your mind dwell again on the faithfulness of God.

- God is faithful to correct us. What God was doing to His people was the loving correction of their Heavenly Father. Even when God has to discipline us, we can praise Him for His father's love. It is evidence of His faithfulness. King David would say:

**Psalm 119:75 - I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in FAITHFULNESS you have afflicted me.**

- God is faithful to forgive us.

**1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is FAITHFUL and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

- God is faithful to sanctify us.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 - May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through ... The one who calls you is FAITHFUL and he will do it.**

- God is faithful to strengthen us.

**2 Thessalonians 3:3 - But the Lord is FAITHFUL, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.**

- God is faithful to deliver us in the hour of temptation.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is FAITHFUL; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**

So we can rejoice with David as he praised the Lord for His faithfulness:

**Psalm 36:5 - Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your FAITHFULNESS to the skies.**

God never abandons His people, even when our faith is weak.

**2 Timothy 2:13 - If we are faithless, he will remain FAITHFUL, for he cannot disown himself.**

Dear friend, as your soul is weighed down and heavy within you, think on these things. But don't let it stop there. There's not only what we should think, but also...

### **3. WHAT WE SHOULD SAY (Lamentations 3:24a)**

**Lamentations 3:24a - I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion..."**

What happens here is that in the midst of all the depressing circumstances in his life, Jeremiah gives himself a good talking to. You know, sometimes you have to do that. Think of your thoughts as "voices." I know that's a little weird ... the voices in your head. But really, our thoughts, in a sense,

are voices that are speaking to us. Sometimes our thoughts are the voices of others ... things that they say to us, positively or negatively.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Have you ever had someone say something to you that was hurtful, and you just couldn't get it out of your head. It ruined your whole day because those words (thoughts) just kept dominating everything, including your disposition.

Sometimes our thoughts are really the voice of Satan speaking lies. “You're a failure; you'll never get this right. Everybody hates you. You're no match for that; just give up. It won't matter if you sleep with that person; no one will know or care.” The Bible says that Satan's native tongue is deception.

Hopefully for believers, our minds are so situated that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are the loudest and most powerful voices (thoughts) going on in our thinking at any given time. This is the value and the beauty of Scripture memory and meditation. Singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord helps us do this.

But to make that switch means that we deliberately say something to ourselves.

**Lamentations 3:24 - I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”**

“The Lord is my portion...” What's up with that? This idea originally comes from the days when the Israelites had moved in to possess the Promised Land. Each tribe received their portion of real estate in various parts of Canaan. But the priestly tribe of Aaron and the Levites were not given a portion of land like the other tribes.

**Numbers 18:20 - The LORD said to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share (portion) among them; I am your share (portion) and your inheritance among the Israelites.**

So the Lord would be their portion. In other words, He would be everything they needed. God had already made arrangements to supply their needs in ways that He would not provide for the rest of Israel. And ultimately, God wants all of us to reckon on the Lord to be our “portion.”

**Psalm 73:26 - My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

It's what we say when we say to ourselves, “The Lord is more satisfying to me than sin. The Lord is more satisfying to me than food or sex or possessions or entertainment or hobbies.” That's what it means to say and mean that “the Lord is my portion.”

And by the way, worship starts with saying things like this to ourselves, then it culminates and continues with us saying things like this to the Lord and to each other in public worship. That's why what we do here in corporate worship, week by week, is so important. We help each other speak truth to ourselves and about the Lord.

So there's something about what we should think, what we should say and ...

#### **4. WHAT WE SHOULD DO (Lamentations 3:24b-25)**

**Lamentations 3:24 - I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."**

So knowing this about the Lord, Jeremiah is determined to wait for God to act out of His loyal love. But waiting is not inactivity. It is the activity of deliberately looking to and trusting in the Lord to work things out in His time and in His way. Waiting is not quitting; it is expectant looking.

**ILLUSTRATION** – When you go to the emergency room or the doctor's office you will sit (sometimes for a long time) in a waiting room. In that waiting room you're thinking, "Help is coming. Health is coming."

By the way, God was faithful to His covenant with His people. After their captivity He brought them back to the Promised Land, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, and restored the Temple. God is faithful when we wait upon Him.

And the next verse shows us what waiting looks like.

**Lamentations 3:25 - The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;**

The NT puts it this way in...

**1 Peter 4:19 - So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

#### **CONCLUSION**

Here's what I'm asking us to do in closing, and before we share together in the Lord's Supper.

**Lamentations 3:22-23 - Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

I want you to take your pen and write on your sermon notes sheet or in your iPad the "compassion" or "mercies" that the Lord has shown you. I'm talking about things that you know God has done for you that you didn't deserve. Maybe it's something that God withheld in the way of punishment or judgment. Jeremiah said, "It's because of the Lord's great love that we are not consumed. God could have just wiped us out completely, but He didn't because He is merciful."

Take a moment and write down the things that come to your mind.

You see, if we have eyes to see the mercies of God in our lives, we will thank him, and trust him with our future. And if we know the price he paid in the death of Jesus to take away our guilt and give us life, we can offer ourselves completely to Him.

**Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

LORD'S SUPPER – MATTHEW 26:26-28