

Toward the Cross

The Fifth Week of Lent

How long, Lord?

Psalm 13:1

Sometimes life is just hard. The world around us is in turmoil; our loved ones are suffering; our own lives feel out of control. Sometimes we wonder what on earth God is doing because it sure seems like He's not on the same page as we are. Sometimes the wheels come off, and the entire world just seems broken. Well, it is. The world is broken, and there is nothing any of us can do to fix it.

Sometimes I'm tempted to ask myself: Why am I here in a broken world, full of broken people and broken systems? Why am I here with a broken heart, looking at the mess all around me, the mess inside me, with no ability to change anything?

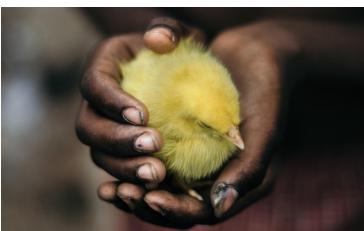


I'm not the first one of God's people to wonder. Sometimes I totally relate to the prophet Habakkuk when he said, "How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? ... Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds." (Habakkuk 1:2-4) Habakkuk and I try to puzzle out what God is thinking, but He is so far beyond us that all we can do is wonder in frustration.

This is the world Jesus came into—a broken world, filled with broken people who didn't understand Him. He gave up everything: home, peace, perfect union with the Father and the Spirit. And when He came here, He didn't fix the obvious problems. His people were still suffering under Roman rule. Most people were still living lives that made little sense. But Jesus didn't come to cure the ills of this world. He came to bring healing to our souls by reconciling us to the Father. That reconciliation came at the cost of His life.

God didn't create me to sort out people or governments or nations. And He certainly didn't create me to understand Him. God asks only two things of us: to love Him and to love people.

Our job is to reflect Jesus—His reconciling love—to the world around us. Part of reflecting God is sharing the Lord's pain as well as His joy. And be sure, the mess of this world is painful to Him. We are called to love Him and His creation in the midst of the mess. The joy is that we live in a post-Calvary era. So while we share the pain and grief, while we walk in compassion with those who are suffering, we also remember that Jesus died precisely so that we don't have to live in that state of pain forever.



What do you feel is broken in your life?

How can you give the broken parts of your life to Jesus?

Exercise:

1. Lift this time up to the Lord and ask Him to show you what He wants you to know through this exercise.
2. The psalm below is a lament. (A lament is different from a complaint because a lament addresses God, who is able to change the situation. Most biblical laments start by laying out the problem before God and end by recognizing His greatness.) Read the psalm.

Psalm 13

¹ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
³ Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
⁶ I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

3. Think about your own life, your questions for God, the things that grieve you, and write a prayer in the form of a lament like Psalm 13.
4. Read your lament aloud to the Lord. Then sit in silence for a while. He may speak into your heart, or He may simply share your sorrow.
5. Finally, speak with God / journal about whatever has arisen in your heart during this exercise.