

Imagine you are the Doctor... and someone comes to see you who is in great pain.... they have a boil... you know that it needs to be drained or they may suffer a worse fate than pain. You know it is exquisitely sensitive and anything you do by way of intervention will hurt worse for the moment, but that as soon as it is drained there will be relief of pain and the healing journey will begin. It will be a painful procedure, time consuming, costly for materials and equipment, will contaminate the room, will smell terrible and will leave a scar. Can't you just prescribe an antibiotic and walk out? It would be so much simpler and the patient will not blame you for the pain. Whatever scar occurs will not be your fault, since you can't predict exactly where the boil will burst forth anyway, though you cannot be sure the patient won't die of sepsis before the boil breaks, and the spread of the infection if in fact it is a bacterial resistance species could result in amputation or worse. What do you do? You have the training and equipment but it will cost both you and the patient extra effort, time, suffering, dressings, repeat visits and worse, you are going to hurt the patient. If you proceed there will usually follow a weak but relieved "thank you" as the patient realizes immediate relief of the pain they came with, and the new pain you caused is a vast improvement. The healing journey has begun. How much more will the Great Physician direct his wounds for your healing? Will you consent? Jesus gives informed consent. Count the cost.... Unless you are willing you cannot be my disciple.... are you able?... If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.... On and on he informs us and cautions us about the cost and pain of following... yet when we ask him to proceed with our care he does what is necessary to initiate the healing journey. If you have no idea what I am talking about it may be time for you to **consider the gospel message personally**. The bible says.... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God **Romans 3:23**. The bible says For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 6:23** The bible says...."For it is better if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the Spirit". **1Peter 3:17-18** The Bible says "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in his name shall not perish but have everlasting life." **John 3:16** The bible says "Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has gone the new has come." **2 Corinthians 5:17** If you do not know him why not start today on your healing journey of Faith in Christ. He will drain the sin that is destroying you and leave you with his faithful wound and the healing scar of vastly reduced pain. Your life will return from the one who gave it, twice over by new birth, and you can rest in his peace with a healing pain rather than the destructive one you came to him with.

There are some things in life that defy description; some things that are beyond words. Some things that are so shocking and so profound and so extreme and so devastating if you were to read them in a book you would doubt their authenticity. Some of these events are normal life situations, and some seem to come from the pit of Hell itself where the enemy of our soul is destined to spend eternity after he has done his utmost to destroy as many of our souls as are vulnerable to his attacks. If he tempted the Son of God, Jesus Christ, God of very God and Man of very Man, do you NOT think he will be after your soul too oh disciple of Christ? If you desire to follow after Jesus you may receive some wounds that authenticate your affiliation in ways you will never forget. What the enemy is afraid of is that once you have stood your ground against him, in Christ and your soul remains intact, you will never again place your trust in any

scheme, or plan, except the shed blood of Christ for the salvation of your soul. He purchased your soul at great personal cost, a value beyond measure. He bought it and is able to keep it. **Your soul is safe for eternity if it is In Christ alone, by Faith alone, through grace alone. It is safe in God's almighty hands and nothing can touch you there,** dear Christian Brother and Sister in Christ... **everything else is temporary.**

Now while you know that is true, there may be times in life where it doesn't feel that certain, and you may even have doubts about it. One of the characteristics of those who are alive is their perception of pain. Doctors use this perception to determine what level of life humans are at. Once in a deep comatose state, humans stop responding to pain directly and demonstrate abnormal responses to pain. The dead fail to respond.

One of the strategies of the enemy of our soul is to side line us with pain. One of the strategies humans use to numb pain is to attain altered states of consciousness and in these states, may have very altered responses to pains of various kinds. Very few if any of these could be classified as healthy. Anger rages out of control, grudges turn into homicide charges and incarceration, despair turns into suicide attempts, addictions abound with life resources squandered and misdirected, marriages end and families disintegrate.

So then consider with me for the next few moments we have together how would a Disciple of Jesus Christ respond to pain???? **How would you respond to pain and suffering? How would you encourage someone who was in great pain?**

One of the dichotomies of life that is difficult to comprehend is the counterpoint between God's Power and God's love when it comes to human pain and suffering. If God is all loving, then why does he allow his children to suffer pain and loss? Is He unable to stop it? If he is all powerful and could stop it, but allows it anyway then how can he be all loving? Our problem is the severe short sightedness of our perspective at our mortal finite vantage point. What seems a loss now can be an investment in the Kingdom, bringing fruit that could have come no other way. What seems unloving now may be Love incarnate come Judgment day. What seems weak now may be strength of unwavering grace and mercy to those who would otherwise be lost for eternity. How could we possibly pass judgment on the eternal when we have little or no understanding of it, and our senses so inhibited by the temporal experiences of mortality?

Listen to a poem penned by one of your brother's in Christ in the throws of grief.

Standing Still

Standing still, silently, looking up

Each memory a silent sorrow.

Silent tears falling in the dirt

A steady rain that will bring life again.

The flowers faded with the life lost

Petals crushed flooding the room with fragrance.

Her daughter slept with the blooms by her nose  
and tears in her eyes.  
Her husband yearned for the restoration of oneness  
released from his lonely toil and despair  
yet his broken heart still beat,  
alive inside a dead man's chest.  
The breath of life again infused  
The soul awakes to praise again.  
The Lord gives and takes away  
Becomes Himself the reason to live.  
Bless his name and let him carry  
The father of the motherless,  
who is standing, still.

Used by permission copyright 07/07/2005

As you move down the road of life, somewhere along the way you may encounter such a battle, or such a loss, or such a tragedy, or such a shock that your soul may feel threatened and you may not be sure quite what to do or how to respond. At such a time you may find it very difficult to worship. You may even find it stressful to gather together with brothers and sisters in Christ. You may not be able to make it through even one verse of a worship song without bursting into tears.... Or choking them down in silence while you listen and wonder where God has gone. At times like these there is a type of worship little known and even more seldom practiced. **Michael Card, in his book Sacred Sorrow describes for us what he calls the forgotten worship, the worship of lament.** It is this tool that we want to explore and understand together.

There are many types of worship. You will find worship listed as one of the elements in a growing and maturing in Christ discipling chart that Pastor Tom has been talking to us about in recent weeks. It is located on the right side, fourth bar down entitled "about worship" and "worship 24/7", two ends of a spectrum. The worship of lament is but one of the types of worship available to children of the King. Let us look briefly at Four heroes of scripture who exemplify an understanding of the worship of lament and the way in which this type of worship was used to defend the soul against destruction.

#### **Job: Lament of loss in grief's journey expressed in Worship**

##### **Job 1:1-3, 6-12 Loss of Relationships, Health, a Homesick Pilgrim and a living death 6:8-10,**

So the take down began with Satan in charge of everything except Job's soul, which belonged to God by God's own reserve bid. Job's relationships, his wealth, earthly possessions, businesses,

servants, workers, all were taken in rapid succession. Job was homesick longing to depart his pain and sorrow and go to a better place. He was lonely. He was misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented by Friends who considered themselves religious. Job lived through despair and hopelessness. Still he had no plan B, his trust was in God alone. Job 13:15a “though he slay me yet will I hope.” Job’s laments span the whole book, but the synoptic of Job’s lament comes early after his first set of losses. Pastor Tom will be bringing us a series on this book in days to come. Stay tuned for an encouraging study of a man who seemed to live way before his time. Job prayed directly to God and pled his case long before the Great Physician had come. His perceptions and understandings are precocious and intuitive. Caught in the throws of his devastation and despair with no hope of recovery in the earthly sense and no Plan B, God asks Job’s religious friends to stand down and He listens to Job’s intercession. Job 42:8 “Job will pray for you and I will accept his Prayer”. God himself arranges for a prayer time when Job can intercede for his friends! If you look back to the beginning of the book and read the synoptic of Job’s lament you will discern the attitude of Job’s heart that eventually leads him to such intimacy with the creator, and such ministry to his less than helpful religious friends.

#### Synoptic of Job’s Lament

**Job1:20** At this Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said “naked I came from my mothers womb and naked I will depart. **The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised. In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.**” Job was a much better man than I when it comes to his early synoptic.... Some of us seem to be much more reluctant to come to Job’s understanding. How are you doing with Satan’s curve balls?

#### **David: Lament of sin, Discipline of the sin nature, and a cry for help expressed in Worship.**

**Setting; cf 2 Sam 11:1-12:25** You can read the complete account of how David got into deep trouble that had implications which endured the rest of his life and affected the following generations of his family tree in devastating ways.

David sends his general Joab to begin his spring military conquests. Time on his hands and bored with napping the King wanders the palace roof and becomes a voyeur to his neighbor lady’s bath time. His lust for her is so obsessive that he has reconnaissance find her personal information for his purposes. He invites her, or rather uses his power as a potentate to compel her by invitation to present herself to him for a clandestine amorous encounter culminating in an adulterous climax. When she sends him word of the pregnancy he instructs his general to send her husband, one of the trusted fighting men home on leave. This man avoids intimacy with his wife in support of his comrades on the front lines to maintain his drive and focus for his work in the King’s army. King David then wines and dines him on the second night when his reconnaissance tells him that the man has not slept with his own wife. Still he manages to remain temporarily celibate in favor of his commitment to army life. Next David sends orders to kill him as a war hero by placing him in the front lines and pulling back support when fighting is fiercest. Sure enough the lady’s husband dies a war hero is buried and David is able to marry his widow who is now officially his wife and expecting their first child. God is less than impressed and sends his prophet to confront King David with his escapade of many sins. Nathan the

prophet is crafty and wise and spins an allegorical tale to David about treachery, deceit and stealing, involving a pet sheep. David is incensed and pronounces the death sentence on the perpetrator. Nathan pronounces David himself is that man. David repents and stands down in contrition. Psalm 51 is a prayer for forgiveness and restoration following this sad escapade of pleasure before Joy, Lust before love and selfishness before godly obedience. Many of us have used this worship of lament as we have sought restoration and forgiveness at sad points of contrition and repentance in our own walks of faith. Many of us lament the very nature of the old man and seek the ongoing strength and wisdom to persevere with God's help in the annihilation required to subvert the desires of the old man to the nurturance of the Spirit, as we get our daily tune up. How many countless souls has this lament aided? It is the condition of fallen man to require a pathway back to God's heart and this psalm is authentic as described by one who understood. Jesus is yet to come in this family line and the ministry of reconciliation will continue more focused and holy.

### **Ps 51 A prayer for forgiveness and restoration.**

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

### **Jeremiah : Lament of Leadership, Inadequacy and Empowerment in troubled times expressed in Worship.**

**The assignments and responses typical of Jeremiah's ministry are exemplified in the Allegory that God gives him when he sends Jeremiah to the Potter's house (18:1-6).** Jeremiah watches the potter with a lump of clay on the wheel. Dissatisfied with the result, the potter remolded it starting over and shaping it into a different form as it seemed best to him. God asks a rhetorical question of Israel in Jeremiah's consciousness "can I (God) not do with you Israel, as this potter does?"

Jeremiah 18:1-12 the assignment. God gives Jeremiah a message for the people... The synoptic of this message goes like this.... Tell them they are as malleable as a marred lump of clay in my

hands, and warn them disaster is coming if they do not amend their evil ways and deeds... but they will not listen. They will follow their own plans and each one will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.

Chapter 19 is another allegory of a broken flask, warning of God's coming judgment with similar impact.

Jer 20 1,2 the early result of Obedience, Jeremiah is beaten and placed in stocks.

### **Jer 20:7-18 Broken... the lament**

O Lord you have deceived (persuaded) me, and I was deceived (persuaded); you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" Say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him." But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. O Lord of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause. **Sing to the Lord Praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.** Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

Jer 22: 8-10 the Outcome... God will bring to pass what he has warned, making the people an example, because His people forsook the covenant of the Lord their God and worshipped and served other gods.

Jer 26:1-16 last ditch effort results in death threats and second thoughts 26

Jer 29:4-14 Future hope, encouraging letter, second chances. Empowered ministry goes on... Jeremiah is still in trouble for his diligence and faithfulness... Jer 38 cistern.... No wavering.. God's message remains, and Jeremiah does not waver.... Fast forward.... V 28.... And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured. Chp 40 Jeremiah freed. Ministry goes on... time and again leadership rejects and resents the Message Jeremiah brings. He is accused of lying and manipulating. His message of doom, God's just response to a wayward people is not kindly received, yet his strength to stand alone is never again shaken. That is very interesting. What changed after his worship of lament? How did God anchor his soul? How could he remain encouraging while forecasting disaster?

So that you will not grow weary and lose heart turn for a moment to

**Hebrews 12:1-4** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

If I could somehow encourage you so you all will not grow weary and lose heart it would be most certain to succeed by referring you to what Jesus has done. We need to consider, best for last, the supreme example of Worship seen in

**Jesus: the cost of Obedience. Lament of Mission at its best, expressed in Worship unto death.**

**Hebrews 5: 4-10** No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him “You are my son; today I have become your Father”. And he says in another place, “you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek”. **During the days of Jesus life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.**

As Called by the Father, in his humanity Jesus Christ's act of obedience was beyond price. His worship of Lament starts in the Garden of Gethsemane as he agonized over his decision. As part of his Worship of the Father, in obedience, he sets aside the power and freedom to save himself and return to the intimacy of the Godhead. Rather he agrees to take separation from the Father on our behalf. As if the physical pain of his death were not enough, there was this matter of interruption of eternal unity in the Godhead. With sin on Jesus as our substitute sacrifice, the Father, Holy God, was unable to look on him bearing the sin of the world as the sacrificial lamb. None of us will ever understand the depth of this rejection but it became Jesus' singular cry of pain as he died.... “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” The words of that lament dear child of God will authenticate that Jesus is able to understand any pain you have ever endured, plus more. You and I, if we are in Christ, will never have to undergo the rejection of God. As for physical suffering, social injustice, loneliness of abandonment by his friends, in his darkest hour... Jesus understands. As for the weight of leadership, singular purpose of mission no matter the cost, meekness in victimization.... Jesus understands. Whatever is the source of your worship of lament Jesus gets it! Read V 7 and 8 again; **“he learned obedience from what he suffered”**... the cost of obedience may make no sense at all from your perspective dear child. But God who sees from the eternal will not waste your pain.... His purposes are love and mercy to a fallen world that “refuses to have this man reign over us”. We unjustly crucified the Son of God! If you dare to be His disciple, know you may suffer similar injustices and outcomes. In your moment of truth will you be authenticated as a true disciple or will you deny him? You will either be exposed as a fraud, as you fall away, or else you will need his power in you. You cannot be faithful in your own strength any more than his Disciples were as he was being condemned. If that is how this world treats you be thankful that it is temporary. Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame, “for the Joy set before him”. This radical forward thinking posture characterizes his humble obedience, and ultimate act of Worship, authenticated by the lament

in his struggle as a human, a lament also given as an act of worship; denoted so in verse 7... **“and he was heard because of his reverent submission”**. How paltry pales my irreverent, reluctant, nihilistic acceptance of the submission required.... I so need a Savior who can bring my case as a Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.... So I may be heard because of my Savior’s reverent submission..... as he prays... “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”. That’s me he is praying for... that’s you he is praying for dear soul. Celebrate Verse 9 as you contemplate your worship of lament, and the sacred sorrow he has entrusted you with.... **“and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him”**.... The vast oceans of the Father’s love change the meaning of his sovereign choices, which could confuse us, when taken out of context. Forgive my unbelief O Lord, and my slow reluctant style of obedience, Thy Kingdom come on earth as with the eager anticipated Joys of Heaven in doing your will. Not as we will, but as you will Father. Thank you Abba!

So Dear Brother and Sister in Christ... when the enemy threatens to destroy your soul, run to the foot of the cross with your worship of lament and serve notice to the enemy that there will be no plan B. Either Christ gets you through it or not at all... ignoring all the lies, schemes, devices, smoke and mirrors designed to make you doubt either God’s goodness or his power and focusing your soul through worship on the God who is there. Christ Jesus in his human form did it best, but Job, and Jeremiah and David also understood the Worship of Lament.

As you consider where you are at with respect to your worship of God let **this tool serve to protect your soul from an attack so violent and malevolent that you may be temporarily sidelined for a time of recovery. The Peace of God alone will sustain you and His Spirit alone Comfort you until His Healing restores your soul to able service once again.** This could be what Michael Card in his book refers to as the Wilderness experience. A time where time itself stands still, and the only reality that matters is that there is a God whom you worship with a gift so expensive to you that there is nothing left but to fall exhausted upon his shoulder to be carried and sustained by him until the enemy flees. God himself seems to say “this child is MINE”! Beaten at the foot of the cross where we lay our gift, the foe retreats, knowing his end is sure and final at the day of great reckoning when he and his minions are cast into the lake of fire for eternity. Praise God for his omnipotence and love... that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day! **When your spirit fails you, when your intellect belies your faith crying out that it makes no sense, when the enemy taunts with a derisive sneer your allegiance to a God that would allow pain or suffering, loss or sorrow, then dear soul bring your worship of lament, in that very place and time to the foot of the old rugged cross.** Whatever your source of lament, however expensive it may be to you, he already has satisfied the righteous requirements of the Father and he is worthy to receive your worship. He understands the anguish of your soul and the cry of your heart, and when you come to him, refusing any and all other solutions he will receive you there with your gift of worship and give you in it’s place his peace and Love..... that will last forever. Your lament is temporary, his peace and love are eternal. Your loss is something that is not yours to keep anyway.... At some point in the mortal’s journey he or she will part with all they have known and experienced and enter into eternity where the old order of things will be made new. Until that time we have a strategy to approach directly the throne of Grace through Jesus our Great high priest and Worship the King of Kings in all his glory. He is holy. He is all powerful. He is all knowing. He is all wise. He is all majestic. He is all loving. He is all gracious. He is all merciful. Neither words nor the human mind can comprehend what is in store for those who are in Christ when we meet our Lord face to face. This is the God we worship. Do you think there is a pain or a hurt or a loss or a lament

that is too costly to bring to such a God? He alone is worthy to receive all our Worship.... Including our worship of lament. No one Understands like Jesus... No one counsels like the Spirit. The struggle may be prolonged but it will not last forever. The pain may be beyond your own ability to cope, yet the worship of lament will focus your soul in him alone who can save you. If you refuse all other plans, and worship him alone; he WILL come and save you. The wilderness experience is real and prolonged and is the place where son ship is established, but it will not last forever either. Worship will usher your soul into the presence of this God while you pray and wait for his sovereign answer to your heart's cry. His peace for your angst, and his presence for your loneliness will anchor your soul through the storm. Bring your Worship of lament to him, for he alone is worthy to receive it.

**Response; What is your Lament? Take a moment right now to pray and worship. Let the comforter guide your prayer. Draw close to Jesus at the foot of that cross where he finished His Work. Elders and Pastors will be available to pray with you in the Prayer room if you desire.**

Benediction

**Jer 17:7, 8 Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.**