

God's Lament Over His People

Luke 13:31-35

Introduction

Lament: (n) a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. (v) to mourn (a person's death or loss). We often think of the Jews as enemies of Jesus. But here He is lamenting over Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, the home of the Jews. To lament, as we said, is to mourn a person's death or loss. You don't mourn the loss or death of an enemy. When Jesus pronounces judgment on Israel, it's not with joy or a sense of vindication. But great sorrow, as they are first and foremost His people. He would much rather *take them under His wing (v. 34)*, but they were not willing. They had rejected the prophets God had sent to call them back when they had strayed away. And now they were rejecting His Son. Jesus isn't rejecting them; they are rejecting Him, rejecting the Promise, despising their birthright, just like Esau did. Let's take a closer look at the lament and the reason for it.

Not Simply a Tragic Story

When we first look at this story, we may be tempted to see it as just a tragic story about the Jews. We read all the Old Testament stories of God's people straying away from Him until God sends judgment and trials. Then they repent and turn back, and God prospers them. Only to have the cycle start all over. Once again, they have turned away from God by rejecting His Son. Once again, they are going to face judgment. But Paul says about the stories of the ancient Israelites in **1 Corinthians 10** (read **1 Corinthians 10:6-11**). So too, this story of the Jews is written for our instruction. What can we learn from it?

We Are Heirs of the Promise

Paul says in **Galatians 3** that if we are Christ's, then we are *Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:6)*. Because of our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are God's people, too. We have the same birthright, a spiritual birthright. If we look back to the Garden of Eden, we can see the first promise of the One who will defeat the devil and win salvation for God's people. This is the Seed of the woman who will *crush Satan's head (Genesis 3:15)*. If we trace it in history, we can see the Promised Seed coming down to Adam's son Seth through his line to Noah to Shem and through his line to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who became Israel. From there, the Promise comes through the tribe of Judah and the line of King David to Jesus of Nazareth, the fulfillment of the Promise. On the cross, He defeated the devil and brought salvation to all. Anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior is a recipient of that Promise. That makes us God's people right along with Israel.

Being Heirs Doesn't Mean Worldly Blessings

Luther refers to this line of the Seed as the true church. The false church are the descendants of all who thought they should be in the line of promise, usually because they were firstborn, but for one reason or another, they do not share in the Promise. Cain killed Able. Ham shamed his father, Noah. Ishmael was not Sarah's son. Esau sold his birthright. Luther goes on to say that in his day, the Turks and the Roman Catholics are the false church. Worldly speaking, the true church has never been blessed,

never been the biggest or most powerful. While the false church has seemed to have it all, all the prestige and all the power. All the true church can do is cling to the Promise.

Discouragement

This can lead to discouragement to say the least. Most of the time, it seems like the whole world's opposed to us because we believe in Jesus and His Word. We see numbers shrinking and churches closing and ask, "What's going on? If we are holding to the truth, why is this happening?" We may even feel like giving up at times.

The Way of the World

Some churches, to try to "bring more people in" or be less hated by the world have chosen to go the way of the world. Instead of church being sacred space, they make it look and sound as close to the world as possible. They change their rules and ways of doing things to blend in with the rest of society, taking their cues on morality from the world, not the Word. But in the end, instead of the church gaining the world, the world has gained another church. By forsaking the Promise, they have become another false church.

Repent—Under His Wings

What's the answer for the troubled times in which we live? Jesus said it Himself. He longs to take us under His wings. There's only one way to take advantage of the shelter, protection, and comfort of being under His wings—repentance. When we admit we are poor, miserable sinners and confess to Jesus our sinfulness, He gladly forgives us and shelters us under His wings.

Means of Grace

To this end, He has given us the Means of Grace to live on. Through Word and Sacrament, He forgives our sins and gives us life and salvation. Through the Means of Grace, He shelters us under His wings. God laments over His people when we turn our backs on Him. But if we humbly repent and confess our sins, He gladly takes us back and shelters us under His wings.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
