



## Sermon-based Guide

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

## Week of February 21

### *The Purpose & Necessity of Lament*

## Scripture: Lamentations 1:1-5, 18

### Introduction

This collection of songs was composed after the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Traditionally, authorship is attributed to the prophet Jeremiah.

Purposes for the book:

- To provide an emotional postscript to the book of Jeremiah
- To express grief over the fall of Jerusalem because of her sin
- To remind the readers that “sin, in spite of all its allurements and excitement, carries with it heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain.”

Literary style:

- The entire book of Lamentations is poetic in its form.
- Each chapter of the book is comprised of a poem making five poems in all.
- The poems use the literary style of an acrostic where the poem is built around the alphabet.

### Questions

- How would you define the word “Lament”?** What are the various meanings in that word – confession, mourning, needfulness, sorrow (other meanings)?
- In the Hebrew Bible the name of the Book of Lamentations is ‘ekah. It literally means “how,” which is the first word of the book. The most literal translation of the first phrase of Lamentations is, then, “How can it be?” That evokes a sense of puzzlement or even amazement at what Jeremiah sees as he views the current state of Jerusalem.

**What areas in your life would lead you to say, “How can it be?”**

**What areas in our country would lead you to say, “How can it be?”**

**What areas in the church** (either First Pres or the American church or the worldwide church) **would lead you to say, “How can it be?”**

- Soon-Chan Rah in his book *Prophetic Lament* compares the laments of God’s people in the Book of Lamentations to **two alternative reactions**.

One of those alternatives is the temptation to **withdraw**. This is when God’s people ignore the state of exile and their surroundings and “shelter in place.” They confine themselves to their own people and ignore those around them.

The second temptation is to **acquiesce** to the culture around them, to heed the words of the false prophets that lead away from the confession of our role in forgoing God’s covenant (God’s promise to be for us which in turn means our promise to be for and with God) to believing that God is not disciplining us to draw us away from the world and back to him. It’s the “Head in the Sand” option.

**Do you see these 2 temptations in your life? Is one greater than the other?**

**Do you see us as a church living into one or both of these temptations?**