

February 22, 2010

Scripture Reading: James 4:1-17

Sometimes I think we have forgotten how to lament.

The dictionary says that the word "lament" means "a passionate expression of grief or sorrow." This describes our reactions to the deaths of loved ones, and in this way, we do lament. But there is another aspect of lament which too often gets lost in our desire to be happy and joyful. That is, the Bible's consistent call for people of God to lament their sins.

The Hebrew prophets called the people of Israel to lament the ways they failed to keep the Covenant. Many passages in the Book of Jeremiah call for and express lamentation.

Today's reading from James also calls for God's people to lament. Amid a litany of accusations--conflict, murder, craving, covetousness, adultery, gossip, arrogance (there's something for everyone)--James says, "Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection." It's not that he wants us to be unhappy, but that he wants us to be honest with ourselves and not take the grace of God for granted.

Lent is a season for searching: searching our hearts and searching for God. It is a season for lamenting our sin and throwing ourselves upon the mercy of a gracious God. Sadness, grief, and mourning are not bad. Sometimes there are just what we need.

Find time for prayer today: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Be as honest with yourself and God as you possibly can. Confess your sins and trust in God's forgiveness.