

Psalm 13

May 31, 2020

This events of this week have highlighted deep divisions and simmering anger in our nation. The horrifying scenes began on Monday and haven't stopped since.

How is a Christian to respond to the events this week? How are we to respond?

Monday, May 25th, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on the neck of George Floyd for over 8 minutes. Floyd cried out, "I can't breathe." By the time medical help came, he was unresponsive. George Floyd met his end on a Minneapolis street.

All of this was videoed by a bystander.

Since then, Chauvin has been arrested and public protests have swept our country. Some protests were just that, a gathering of people to express their first amendment rights. While many have been peaceful, some have been violent.

Last night I read this headline from the Washington Post:

America braces for another night of chaos after police, protestors clash in dozens of cities.

In my Twitter feed I saw:

- Marching
- Chanting: No Justice No Peace
- Police in Riot Gear
- Yelling
- Accusing
- Pushing
- Shoving
- Looting
- Cars Ablaze
- Tear Gas

The National Guard has been deployed to keep the peace in over a dozen American states. Protesters and Secret Service Agents clashed in Washington DC. Protesters clashed with Police in:

Philadelphia
Los Angeles
New York
Boston
Salt Lake City
Chicago

Madison, WI
Grand Rapids

How are we to respond?

Curfews have been declared in—

Minneapolis
Los Angeles
Atlanta
Denver
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
Seattle
Cleveland
Columbus
Miami
Milwaukee
Rochester

How are we to respond?

How are we to respond to the roiling rage that is spilling onto America's streets? I'm saying—we not as in Americans—but as in our church. As in ourselves. How are we to respond to these events?

Lamentation.

Cry out to the Lord for help.

Lamentation calls for help only he can provide.

That we cry out and ask for the Lord to help. The help we need in our nation at this moment is not going to come from—any politician. The help we need is not going to come from the National Guard. The help we need as a nation is not going to come from a political party. The help we need as a nation is not going to come from our governor or any governor. The help we need as a nation is not going to come from our president or any president.

We need the help only God most high can give. The help we need can only come from God alone. And it is to him we direct our attention this morning.

Lord—Help!

Psalm 13

[1] How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?
[2] How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

[3] Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
[4] lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

[5] But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

[6] I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

PRAY

The largest number of all of the 150 Psalms in the Psalter is lament. Nearly 1/3 of these prayers express lamentation. Lamentation is not just venting emotion or screaming out. Lamentation cries and cries out to God.

The purpose of the lament is to lay before the Lord our feelings—as a means of expressing trust in him.

1. A Cry—To the LORD

[1] How long, O LORD?

I think that should be our cry. How long? How long, O LORD?

The point is that he calls out to the Lord. Directly. Prayer is not an internal musing, but direct address to God.

The most important thing about this is the turning to God. We must turn to God, first and most often especially in times of trouble. Turn to the Lord and cry to him.

Turn the Lord first and most often.

When we see a hopeless and confusing situation—like we see in our nation today—we can be tempted to turn FIRST a great many directions. But we must Turn to the LORD—First.

NOT to the news.

NOT to your spouse.

NOT to law enforcement.

NOT to a politician.

The important element of the lament is the direction. One author says, “Laments turn toward God when sorrow tempts you to run from him.” We might also say Laments turn toward God when anger, confusion, bewilderment, tempt you to run from him.

I don’t know where you find yourself this morning?

Sorrowful?
Angry?
Confused?
Bewildered?

I do know what you are to do with those feelings. Cry out to God.

Oh Lord—help our nation!
Oh Lord—help our governmental leaders!
Oh Lord—help our business owners!
Oh Lord—help the protestors
Oh Lord—help the police

To get the Lord’s attention all you have to do is call out to him.

How are we to respond?

First, with a cry. Second,

2. A Complaint—To the LORD

[1] How long, O LORD?
Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
[2] How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

The Psalmist feels abandoned by God. You might feel that as you see the images coming in from all over the country—and you think, “How could God allow this?” “Where is God?” “Why did God allow this?”

Have you forgotten us?
Are you hiding your face from us?
How long will this go on?

We should take the full weight of our pain to the Lord. Not to Facebook, twitter, Instagram. Not to your best friend, your spouse or your favorite news station.

We should move to the Lord with our sorrow.

Pour out your complaints with tears to him.
Pour out your frustrations to him.
Pour out your confusions to him.
Pour out your bewilderment to him.

One of the reasons we don't know how to lament is because we pour out our complaints, frustrations, confusions, and bewilderment to in every other direction but not to God. He can handle our complaints and any expression we bring to him.

When you pour out your complaints people you are just venting, when you pour out your complaints to God you are praying. We need to pray.

The situations we find ourselves as a nation defies neat and clean little categories. All you need to do is: fill in the blank. There is more than that.

Sometimes in a lament we just need to pray—help!

And help is what we need in every direction.

We are used to seeing these scenes in—

Beirut
Sarajevo
Beijing
Baghdad
Belfast.
Medellín

Not here.

But we are not special. We are not made of other stuff and somehow superior to other nations that have violence in their streets. We are the same. It is good to remember that as wonderful as the Constitution is, there will not be a copy in heaven. The church has better founding documents that speak a more lasting word.

America is not tasked with some kind of special purpose from God—but his church is.

What?

To be a light to the nations.

In our lament we should cry out that the Lord NOT forget this nation. That he not abandon us because of our hard hearts and idolatry. We can cry out for—

Justice? Yes.

We should hope and pray that peace reigns again in our streets.

Martin Luther King Jr, put it like this—

“While it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me but it can keep him from lynching me and I think that is pretty important, also.”

That is right.

We must pray for justice—pray for everyone involved.

We should not assume that we understand the motives for everyone doing what they are doing. There are no easy answers. The problem is BOTH more complex and easier than we think.

It is more complex—

Racial tensions—I can’t presume to understand.

Right to protest? –Yes

Right to loot? –No.

Police responsibilities—I don’t know what it is like.

Responsibility to protect? Yes.

Right to brutality? No.

We should avoid broad generalizations. Everyone this or everyone that.

The challenge is more complex but it is also simpler.

The power of sin is in play. There is plenty of sin on the right and the left. Our nation on both the right and the left needs the scourge of the power of sin removed by the great sin-bearer. That is what our nation needs and that is what we must call out for.

Russell Moore gives us some good counsel,

“Let’s grieve for the innocent. Let’s demand justice for the guilty. And let’s rage against the reptile that is behind it all.” Satan, our great adversary seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. He is on the RIGHT and the LEFT. He destroys using any means possible. Satan comes not from the right or the left but from hell.

A Cry

A Complaint

A Confidence

3. A Confidence—In the Lord

[5] But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

[6] I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

David calls out to the Lord.
David complains to the Lord.

We can trust unreservedly our Lord. I have no idea what form justice will look like in this situation, but I can tell you someone won't be happy. True justice does not exist in this world. Don't misunderstand, we SHOULD work for justice. We SHOULD care about justice. We SHOULD demand justice.

But we should realize ONLY God delivers perfect justice.

I think sometimes we forget that.

I am all for working for and towards justice in this world. We must. But there is a limit to what we can do. No bit of justice is ever going to bring George Floyd back to the land of the living. And the best we can do is an incomplete passing thing.

But the Lord sees. He takes note. Think about it this way—

Concerned about racists in our country? Me too.

But not as much as God. No one hates racism like the Creator of mankind. He created all races, all people in his image. When one image bearer of God discriminates against another, no one is more angry than God. When someone is treated unjustly because of the color of their skin, no one is more irate than God.

God is, even now, storing up wrath against racists. For those racists that do not humble themselves and turn to Jesus, they will face the unending wrath of God for their racism.

Are you concerned about those looting? Me too.

But not as much as God. No one hates that sort of violence and theft like God. Do you think that those who are using protests as an excuse to loot are getting away with anything? Think again. God notes. He sees. And his anger boils.

God is, even now, storing up wrath against thieves. For those thieves that do not humble themselves and turn to Jesus, they will face the unending wrath of God for their thievery.

Are you concerned with law enforcement that abuse power? Sure.

But not as much as God. God hates those who abuse their power and use it to trample on others. Not one person in any position of authority who abuses their power will get away with it.

A God without wrath for injustice, racism, oppression is not a God worth worshiping.

We need to remember what our nation needs. Our nation needs the same thing as our neighbors. There is a deep seeded hostility that cannot be erased by any human institution. Our nation needs something more than—

Political Rhetoric
Peaceful Demonstrations
Political Rallies
Community Conversations
Government Solutions
Institutional Promises

Our nations and our neighbors need the healing power of Jesus Christ. Our neighbors need to hear of the one who suffered at the hands of sinful men when he did nothing wrong. Talk about the innocent suffering unjustly. Look to Jesus.

Our nation and our neighbors needs to hear of the one who suffered for—those who loot, those who abuse their power, those who oppress, those who are oppressed. Our nation and our neighbors need Jesus.

Brian Davis helps—

Jesus knows about suffering—he suffered for sinners.
Jesus knows about justice—he suffered unjustly.
Jesus knows about being wrongfully treated—he was innocent.
Jesus knows about our weaknesses—yet he sympathizes with us.
Jesus knows how to show mercy to criminals.
Jesus knows what it is like not to have government officials protect him.
Jesus knows how the penalty of sin—he suffered it for us.
Jesus knows about living in a wicked world.
Jesus knows what it is like to die at the will of a mob.

And he knows what it is like to defeat the power of death.
He promises to wipe away our tears.
He knows a place where there is no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain.

He knows this and this is what our neighbors and nation needs to know.

HELP us LORD!

PRAY