

April 26 - Lesson Two: Gratitude and Lament for the Journey

As we head further into a difficult and unknown situation (our own desert or raging waters), there will be a strain on our mental health. The practices of gratitude and lament can help us stave off despair and deal with our darkest feelings in a healthy way in God's presence. Paul treats gratitude and rejoicing as a decision — maybe even an obligation. The book of Psalms includes some 42 psalms of lament — nearly one third of the psalter. As the ultimate song book and prayer guide of the Jewish and Christian faiths over the millennia, this gives us permission and language to take our hardest thoughts and emotions to God. Gratitude is a decision. Lament is a powerful invitation.

- Scriptures to Consider
 - Philippians 4:4-7 (reading this passage in context would also be a good idea)
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
 - Psalm 22 in entirety.

- Questions to Discuss
 - *What are you grateful for right now? (What is giving you life?)*
 - Paul commands his readers in Philippi and Thessalonica to rejoice. What does it mean that joy and gratitude can be commanded?
 - How is it helpful to choose gratitude even in the midst of hardship or suffering?
 - What is hard about it? Are there any problems with choosing gratitude? Any pitfalls, dangers, or temptations?

 - *What hurts? (What is stealing life from you?)*
 - What did you think about Jonathan's comment that sometimes the lament of others might break us, but it won't break God?
 - Read some examples of lament from the psalms. Try and reword these into laments for the current situation. With permission to lament, what would you say to God?