

Lamentation as a Response to God

17th September 2022

Outline

1. Understanding God's will in times like this
2. Lamenting and lamentation as a response to our time
3. The role of the virtue of hope

Part I - Finding God's Will

**"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

God's Perfect, Consequential and
Permissable

God's Perfect Will

That all would come to know Him

Ez 18:32 ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

Ez 33:11 ¹¹ Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

1Tm 2:3-4 ³ This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God's Perfect Will Includes Our
Free will

“Almighty God would in no wise permit evil to exist in His works, unless He was so almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil”

St Augustine

God brings good out of evil

- Joseph sold as a slave
- Israel chooses a king
- Christ's death on the cross

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him"

Rm 8

**“...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of
God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

1Th 5

Part II - Our Response, Lamentation

What is our response?

Faced with our failings, weakness and sin. Faced with difficulty, seeing others and ourselves suffer, what is our response?

AND

Realising that God is permitting this for a purpose: both for us individually and as a community

Lamentation:

"a passionate expression of grief and/or sorrow"

Webster's Dictionary

“What is the greatest thing in the Psalter but this earnest speaking amid the storm winds of every kind? . . . Where do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation? There again you look into the hearts of the saints, as into death, yes, as into hell itself. . . . When they speak of fear and hope, they use such words that no painter could so depict for your fear or hope, and no Cicero or other orator has so portrayed them. And that they speak these words to God and with God, this I repeat, is the best thing of all. This gives the words double earnestness and life”

Martin Luther

My Definition of Lamenting

Lamenting is fundamentally about expressing to God the pain, suffering, despair that I/we find ourselves in

AND

believing that God, even in the circumstances that I/we find ourselves in – that God can and will deliver us.

Lamentation is about two things:

Expressing in tangible ways our hurt and pain

AND AT THE SAME TIME

Expressing with conviction our hope in God

"My God, My God why have you forsaken me, why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning. O my God I cry by day but you do not answer, and by night, but find no rest".

Ps 22:1-2

"Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel, in you our fathers trusted; they trusted and you did deliver them! To you they cried and were saved; in you they trusted and were NOT disappointed"

Ps 22:3-5

Observations about Lamenting

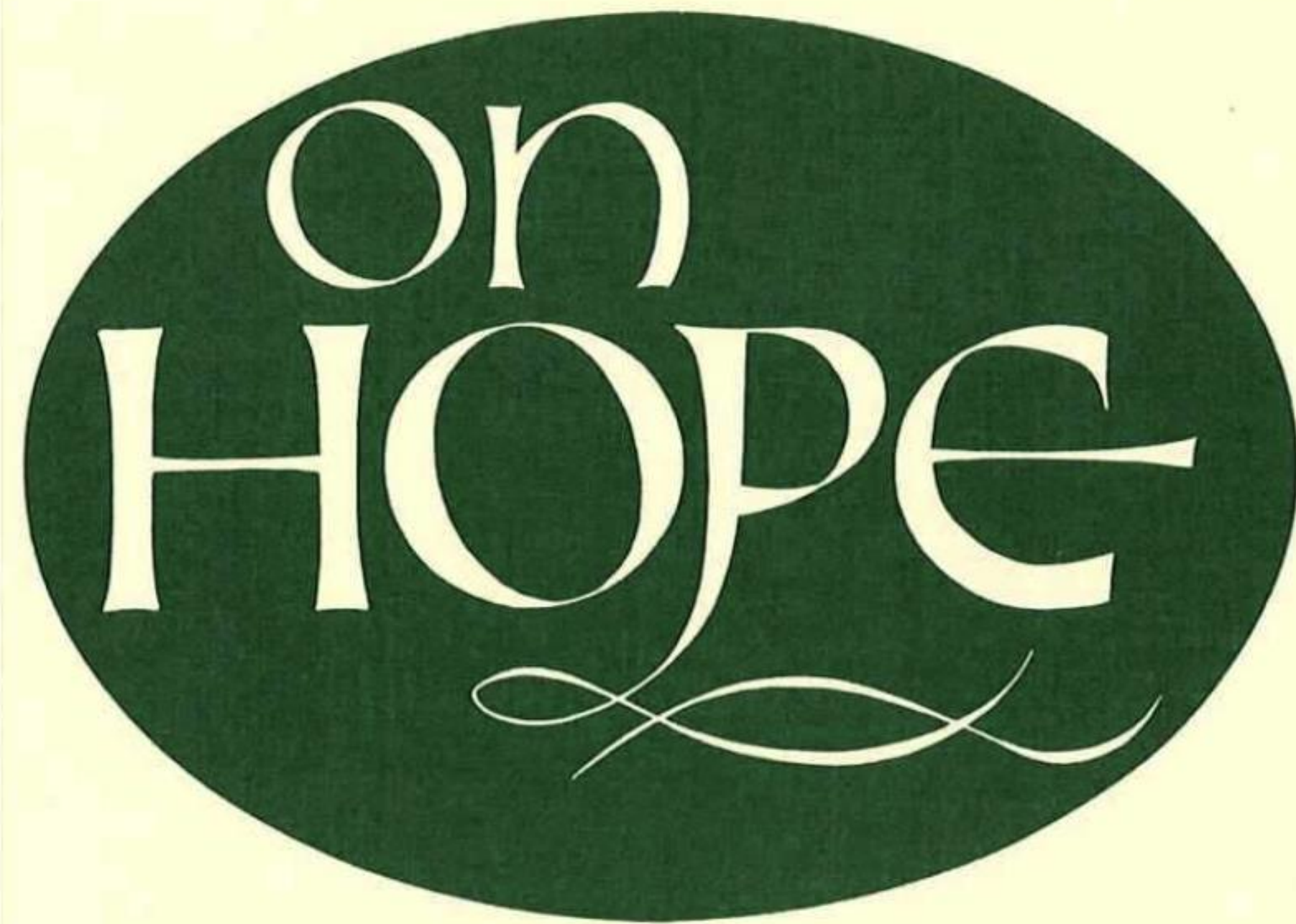
1. Is lamenting about changing God's mind of our circumstances?
 - No!!
 - It is about us aligning our will to His
2. Brutal honesty is part of lamenting

And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything’? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Part III - The Virtue of Hope

JOSEF PIEPER

on
HOPE



IGNATIUS

3 Points About Hope

1. Christian Hope is fundamentally oriented towards the life of the age to come

Already and Not Yet

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Eph 2:4-6 But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Hope is the proper virtue of the "not yet"

Josef Pieper

"If for only this life we HOPED in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied."

1Co 15

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

3 Points About Hope

1. Christian Hope is fundamentally oriented towards the life of the age to come
2. Hope is a Theological Virtue

A Theological Virtue

- Theological: Comes from God and directs us back to him
- Virtue: An habitual and firm disposition to do the good

Hope begets hope, by God's grace

3 Points About Hope

1. Christian Hope is fundamentally oriented towards the life of the age to come
2. Hope is a Theological Virtue
3. The enemy of hope is despair

The Root of Despair

God Can't or Won't Deliver Us!

- Spiritual Sloth (Greek “acedia”)
 - From not praying
 - From spiritual distraction

Conclusion

**Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead thou me on
The night is dark, and I am far from home
Lead thou me on
Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me**

J H Newman

Meditation

Psalms of Lament

3	17	39	54	61	86
4	22	41	55	64	120
5	26	44	56	70	140
10	28	52	57	71	141
13	31	53	59	77	142