This prayer has been adapted from:

The Prayer of Lament: What To Do When We Don’t Know What To Do



by Ruth Haley Barton

“Our only hope is to march ourselves to the throne of God and in loud lament cry out the pain that lives in our souls.” Ann Weems

Our hearts are heavy this day and tears are close to the surface as we watch the unwatchable, think about (and try not to think about) the unthinkable, bear the unbearable, cry out for solutions to the unfixable. Our groanings are too deep for words. Tears come at the oddest moments. Despair crouches at the door, waiting to set up housekeeping in our souls.

*“A voice is heard in Ramah and in Syria, lamentation and bitter weeping. Mothers weep for their children; they refuse to be comforted for their children, because they are no more.”* (Jer. 31:15)

How does one respond to events that are as tragic and disturbing as what we have witnessed in our country the past few days, weeks, and months?

While there will necessarily be a call to a variety of actions and responses to the injustice and the racism, the hatred and the violence we must eschew, our Christian tradition offers us the prayer of lament. This prayer gives us a way of being with God and with each other during times of deep and incomprehensible loss.

**The Lost Prayer**

The prayer of lament is that unsettling biblical tradition of prayer that includes expressions of complaint, anger, grief, despair, and protest to God. Many of us have never been taught this way of praying and it is often missing in the worship of many congregations.

As Samuel Balentine describes it, “The church taught me how to pray and, more subtly, how not to pray. One was to praise God, but not protest; to petition God, but not interrogate; and in all things to accept and submit to the sometimes incomprehensible will of God, never challenge or rebel. Yet when life’s circumstances would not permit either such passivity or such piety, this advocacy of a rather monotonic relation to God seemed destined to silence if not exclude me. ‘You must not question God.’ If one cannot question God, then to whom does one direct the questions?”

**Lamenting Together**

The prayer of lament is a place to begin as we seek to respond to the sin, the brokenness, and the complexity of our life together as human beings. It is tempting to rush to problem-solving and fixing when the situation is so dire, but I hope we won’t. Let us stop, at least for a moment, and lament together.