



*United Presbyterian Church
Harrodsburg, Kentucky
Meditation for Sunday September 27, 2020*

Rev. Janice Stamper

Dear Ones in Christ,

I greet you in the name of the One who is Love. Let us quieten our hearts to hear God's word for us today.

Today's Lectionary psalm in Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 however today I am using Psalm 137.

1 By the rivers of Babylon — there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows there we hung up our harps. 3 For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! 6 Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. 7 Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall, how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it down! Down to its foundations!" 8 O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! 9 Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!

This psalm is full of grief, pain, and anger as the psalmist recalls how awful it was in the Babylonian exile. They sat and wept remembering Zion, remembering how it was before they were captured and exiled. Added to such pain was tormentors asking for them to sing, "Don't Worry, Be Happy"! What a powerful question, "How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?"

The psalmist asks the LORD to remember what the Babylonians have done and to punish them. The psalmist wants payback and revenge. My heart cringes every time I read, "Happy shall they be who takes your little ones and dash them against the rock."

This psalm is raw and real. There's no sugar coating the devastation and pain. It contains the unleashing of a soul that is fed up with everything and everyone.

We need to be real and raw with the LORD just like this. We need to stop saying, "Make American Great Again", "Get over it", "Go back to where you came from" and all the other insane phrases.

People are hurting as if in captivity from greed and power with an unbridled religious nationalism. Then COVID-19 has revealed much that people have tried to hide. White people are acting like they are gods of this nation that was borne to the slaughter of First Nation people, who lived here, and on the backs of Blacks, who were brought here to build this nation as slaves. And when people cry out from the oppression they have suffered for hundreds of years religious people tell them to sing, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”!

Sometimes we need to just be raw and real with God. We need to weep and lash out, not at others, but to God about others. We need space to reveal the grief and pain to the LORD.

As a white person I can be one of the tormentors without even realizing it if I am not attentive to listen to those who are really suffering, and to my participation in their oppression even when I think I may be innocent. I’ve had to ask myself some hard questions and find the courage to speak up and speak out about what I am witnessing knowing friends will turn away.

In some ways this is a foreign land for many of us. There’s the before and after of COVID-19 and the decline of our country from power hungry people. There is the cries of black and brown lives that have been oppressed for way too long that can no longer be ignored and silenced.

I have no easy answers so I will leave you with this question, “How could we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?”

Please pray with me: *God of all beings in the heavens and on earth, hear our cries. Show us how to be open and honest with you. Heal our hearts as only you can. Let us turn to you instead of hurting one another. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.*

Rev. Janice Stamper