The Funeral for Jerusalem

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Our youth choir is meeting at this time, and so John is normally in here with us, but because it's the kickoff night, he's back there getting ready for our students.

We anticipate we'll probably have 90 to 100 students in our youth choir tonight as they kick off, and our kids' choirs also start tonight. And so most, we've got some children and youth in here, but most of them are in our choirs tonight, and so that's where John is.
So thankful for Kashawn to fill in and help. He and Mary are doing an amazing job under Joey's leadership with our student ministry. I was telling Kashawn and Mary a couple of days ago, they had, I think we had like 205 students in our youth service Wednesday night, and I was telling them that the average church in Oklahoma is just a little under 100.
So if you figure on Easter Sunday, give a church 20% attendance increase, that'd be most churches in Oklahoma, and the biggest crowd they would ever see is 120.
And our student ministry had over 200 Wednesday night in their service. And I was telling them, I said, I don't tell you that to make you pat yourself on the back, I tell you that to let you know God has given to our church an amazing responsibility and accountability for what we do with so many teenagers.
[1:51] And they said something like, this makes me nervous. I said, good, I'm going to keep going. I want you to feel this. This is a weight. This is an amazing privilege, but it's a high accountability.

I got to be in a little bit with our students Wednesday night, and as I mentioned last week, Joey spending a couple of weeks with our youth on why we trust the Bible, why we believe the Bible, and just grounding our youth in the core essentials of our faith.
And we literally have, we don't have a church within a church. We actually fight very hard to not have our youth be a church within a church. We want them to be a part of our full church. But just in terms of numbers and the students we're reaching right now, we've got a group of students that would be twice the size of the average church in our state.
And so it is a high accountability and high responsibility. Part of that is because we have such a strong children's ministry, and we've got this army of sixth graders that have now gone from children's ministry to youth ministry.
And it's such an amazing joy because when people in our children's ministry, they are taught the word. It's a word-based ministry. They come into our student ministry, nothing changes.
[3:11] We're just able to teach them even a little bit more. But there's no, like, big paradigm shift because every ministry in our church is based that way. Last Sunday morning, we had, I think, 48 in our Crossroads ministry.

That's like college young adults, which is pretty good for a college town like Mustang. 48 in our college ministry. So just, I mean, our student ministry from preschool, children, youth, and college is just the Lord's blessing in so many ways.
This past summer, it was an amazing thing because every time I walked around our church, I would just see there's a group of people that's doing a book study.
And I'd walk in this room, and Mary's discipling a group of girls here. I'd walk over here, and Kishan's meeting the group of people here. And just all of our people involved in college and student ministry all the way around.
And just every time I turn around, they're meeting with someone, discipling somebody, training somebody. Just really, really thankful. And you see that in the evenings with our adults.

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[4:18] I drive through, and we've got D groups that meet here all the time. And when I see a bunch of cars here, I always panic. What did I forget? What was I supposed to be here to do?

We just have this place just filled all week long with people teaching and training and learning the Word. And just a great, great blessing. We're excited for next Sunday.
Dr. Moeller will be here with us preaching. I was telling our deacons just a minute ago when we were meeting to pray together, I feel confident in saying that when he's here next Sunday, he will be the smartest person that's ever set foot in this building, including Joey.
He will be the smartest person that's ever been here. I don't know what you do with that. One of the guys said, does he speak Okie? And I said, if it's a language, I think he speaks it.
So be praying for him next Sunday morning as he's here. Be praying for our friend Dr. Lawson. He gets in Sunday afternoon.
[5:23] So we'll get Dr. Moeller out of here into the airport, pick up Dr. Lawson. He comes in for the preaching conference. And so it's a very full week, but a lot of great, great things that are going on.

We are really excited for all the Lord is doing. For those of you who teach in children in preschool, Sunday school, you guys are heroes.
Those of you who teach in Awana, we had over 200 kids in Awana Wednesday night. Thank you for those of you who teach in Awana. For those who sing in our choir and just serve in any number of ways.
I just love, if I wasn't busy on Sundays, I would love just to sit back and watch the church work. Just watch everybody do their thing. It's an amazing thing.
So many people just serving faithfully where they are. We've got our next membership class that starts, I don't know if it's this Wednesday or the next Wednesday. Someone will tell me. But we've got like 32.
[6:23] That's just adults. That doesn't count their children. So if all those families join with their kids, you're talking about probably another hundred people the Lord's bringing to our church.

And so these are great, great days. But as we looked at this morning, we've got to be a prayerful people. That's where our power is. It's not in facilities.
It's not in education. It's not in the organization. Our ultimate power is from the Lord. We've got to be a praying people. We also want to continue not only to disciple and train and equip, we also want to continue to be people that are focused on the gospel and doing the work of evangelism.
Tomorrow morning, our staff is going to focus on that. We've got a new friend that's going to meet with us tomorrow and talk some about apologetics and just those things with us.
And we had some emphasis on evangelism this summer, and we'll do so again in a few months and just want to be a people that we don't choose whether to be disciple-making or evangelistic.
[7:34] Those things are both and for the body of Christ. We want to share the gospel, call people to repent, teach and train the ones who are here, and be thankful for that.

So anyway, be prayerful. These are great, great days. The Lord is blessing in so many tangible ways. At the same time, there's always needs among us.
Just in our staff, I mean, in our deacon meeting a moment ago, we were talking about things that we're grateful for and things that are going well. Also had men sharing just their prayer requests from their families, their ministries, areas that they work with.
And those things are always true at the same time. Great victories and great joy, along with things that burden us and that we're praying for. Those things are always true. Those are true for you too.
And so we want to be encouraged and strengthened by the goodness and grace of the Lord while we remain humble and prayerful for the things that we need Him to do. And, you know, it's good for us to have needs.
[8:37] Because if we didn't have any needs, we'd be so quickly self-dependent. And that's not a place of strength for the believer. And so even the needs that exist in our life, those are good things.

Things that drive us to pray are good things. Make us desperately dependent upon the provision of the Lord, the kindness of the Lord, the mercy of the Lord. And those things are good.
Things that remind us we're not in control. And things that remind us how much we need Him. Those are good things. And so let's embrace those. Let's be grateful for every good gift.
Thankful for everything the Lord's doing. And for every need that our church has. Every need that you have in your own heart and family and home. Let that drive you to prayer and seek the mercy and kindness of the Lord.

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The song that Kashawn just led us in, From Sorrows Deep I Call, is kind of an unofficial theme for our study of lamentations. That's the heart.
[9:36] That there are times we're in need. There's times where things around us seem broken. And even in those times, we can call out to the Lord. Turn with me to the book of lamentations, if you would.

We're going to spend a number of sunny nights, Lord willing, as we walk through this. Did an overview last week that I hope helped you have a bit of a grasp of the historical context of the book. And we're going to look at chapter 1 tonight. For 40 years, Jeremiah preached to the people. And he warned them.
He warned them about the dangers that awaited. They did not repent. And the nation went on in their celebrations and willful disobedience.
And while they were doing that, Jeremiah and the prophets were warning them that the storms are going to come. Judgment's going to come. And what the people did is they just continued in their willful, purposeful disobedience, pretending as if storms would never hit them.
[10:42] All the while, the clouds were getting darker and darker and darker. And you could see the coming judgment on the horizon. Habakkuk warned about the destruction of Judah.

Habakkuk, through the word of God, prophesied that God was raising up the Babylonians to come in and bring judgment to them. The Lord told Habakkuk, write this down and make it plain so that he who runs can see it.
In other words, those who are going around the town, I want them to see this. This isn't veiled. This isn't hidden. You know judgment's coming. And when you read it, they can run and tell others.
And most of the people just ignored the warnings and pretended there would be no consequence for their sin. God had raised up prophets to warn the people to call them back home.
And most did not care. It wasn't new that there would be judgment if they disobeyed. That had been God's clear word to them. Deuteronomy 28, for example.
[11:53] And Jeremiah continues to preach this message that was largely tuned out. Like Noah, preacher of righteousness, year after year after year, nobody listened.

Nobody cared. Nobody came. But the message must be preached no matter the response. And sometimes God has for his messengers to preach and great revival happens.
Happened in Jonah's day. But even in Jonah's day, that revival is short-lived. A century later, we get Nahum telling us that the revival was over.
Sometimes God's purpose for God, his messenger, is a word of warning like Jeremiah. And it's a hard ministry and a hard message.
And so, why preach lamentations? If you were here last week, it's not the most pick-me-up book in the canon.
[12:59] Why preach lamentations? Well, there's a few reasons. One, the Bible says preach the whole counsel of God's word. And I want to be faithful to do that.

I don't know how long the Lord's going to allow me to have life and breath, but as long as I can, I want to preach every part of the word that I possibly can. That's one reason. Another, frankly, I've never in my life heard a sermon series of lamentations.
I don't think I've ever heard a sermon from lamentations. I've sung Thomas Chisholm's song a thousand times, Graze Thy Faithfulness. But outside of that, that comes from Lentations 3, I'm not sure that I've ever heard a single sermon from lamentations.
I also think that we need to have a theology that can handle suffering and judgment and destruction and discipline and despair.
I also am aware that people in Jeremiah's day did not like the message he was preaching. And there are some in our day that don't want to hear a message about sin. And in Mark, we're studying through Mark on Sunday mornings, and coming up very, very soon are some warnings about hell.
[14:14] That's frankly not fun to preach on. But you preach the whole counsel of God's word. Lamentations, it's not a lot of fun to preach on judgment, though there is great hope and mercy here for those who will hear the message.

And it does remind us that Jeremiah was called to preach the truth, no matter how it was received, which is critically important. In fact, I would argue that in our day, this is a truth that is of the most importance because we must be reminded today, what was true in Jeremiah's day, that truth is never determined by how it makes you feel.

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Never. Never. What is objectively right and objectively wrong is not determined based on how the reception of those facts make you feel.
That was true in Jeremiah's day. It's true in our days. I also think that while we've got to understand the historical context, and I hope last week some of the history overview I did helped you with that, we've got to do more than just think about history and context, not less than that, but more than that.
And part of what we need to do is just feel the pain of what the people went through. Our culture is not very good at that. We want to make pain go away.
[15:41] I feel bad, give me something immediately. I feel unhappy, make this go away immediately. Well, sometimes you do just need to remind yourself that life hurts.

And sometimes it's the consequence of our sin. And sometimes it's because we live in a fallen world. And sometimes it's because there's evil and wickedness all around us.
And it's not that it leads us to despair, but it does remind us that this life just has real pain.
We've got to be able to handle that. Because cancer doesn't skip over Christians' homes. And tornadoes don't skip over church buildings.
And good, godly people get sick. And good, godly people pass away. And good, godly people have hard things happen to them.
[16:49] And we've got to be able to handle that. And so Lamentations, I think, is a helpful book for us because it does deal with judgment and pain.

And part of what we're going to study is just, the only way to describe this, it just hurts. It just hurts to think about what they've been through. And yet, it all builds to the crescendo, as we looked at last week in the poetic analysis and structure of the book.
It builds to the crescendo in chapter 3 where we're reminded the Lord's mercies are new every morning. And great is His faithfulness. And you need to know that when the stones come crashing down in your life and the pain hits your home, His mercies are new every morning.
And great is His faithfulness. And the next time you sing that hymn, I want you to understand, that text comes from a part of Scripture where life was as dark and hard and broken as it could possibly be.
And to those people, the Lord said, every day the sun comes up, my mercies will be new. chapter 1.
[18:17] We're going to look at this with a few words just to help you get the feel of what's happening. The first word I want you to write down is desolation. Verse 1, chapter 1, How lonely sits the city that was full of people.

How like a widow she has become. She who was great among the nations. She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.
The desolation first is that the city has lost everything. The city used to be full of people and now it's lonely. In English, the first word is how.
How lonely sits the city. The Hebrew term is a bit more powerful. It's more of the English word alas. Not that we would use that word often, but that idea alas, it carries a sense of strong emotion.
It's not just how lonely is the city. It's how lonely is this city. It's alas, my goodness.
[19:28] Look around. Look what's happening. Just take it in. It's a strong statement. The very first word in the text is a word full of emotion.

And this is not merely describing the scene. This is describing the spiritual condition of the people. How lonely is this city?
Used to be full of people. Now it's like a widow alone. Used to be great. Used to be a princess. Now has become a slave. The city has lost everything. Not only has the city lost everything, but the city, the people are lonely.
Verse 2, She weeps bitterly in the night with tears on her cheeks. Among all her lovers, she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her.
[20:29] They have become her enemies. She, the city, has lost everything. The city is lonely. And part of the desolation is that there's no rest.

There's a lack of rest. In verse 3, Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude. She dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place.
This is complete desolation. If you were able to see a picture, if that ability would have been there 700 years before the birth of Christ, that's what we would have seen.

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This is 600 years. So, the armies gather around there. The destruction starts at 605. The temple comes down in 586. Somewhere between 585, 575, these words are penned.
And if there would have been a video taken, 585 B.C., what you would have seen is just devastation.
[21:45] You would have seen smoke billowing up. Nobody there to put it out. You would have seen homes and businesses burned, destroyed.

You would have seen streets that are lonely. You would have heard the cries of people who were left behind, who were starving, who had no hope, who had lost everything, who had parts of their family ripped out from them, who had friends marched off 700 miles away into Babylon.
There was desolation. In verses 5-7, this is a hard part of the book.
There's divine distress. I call it divine for a very specific reason. Verse 5, her foes have become the head.
Her enemies prosper. See, the enemies are real, but the enemies are not sovereign. The Babylonians are real enemies.
[22:54] Real people making real decisions in real time and space, but even the Babylonians themselves are not sovereign. Ultimately, this is the Lord's doing.

And you ask me how I know that or why I say that, just look at the text, verse 5. Her foes, these are real enemies, have become the head. They've really defeated Judah.
Her enemies, these are real people, prosper. Because, so just stop for a minute, the author tells us there's real enemies, they've defeated us, they've overtaken us, they've become the head. destruction, desolation, distress has rained down. Here's why. Because, the Lord has afflicted her. This is the Lord's doing. He had warned the people, destruction was coming, if you do not repent, and they did not repent. He had warned them to take the prophet's message seriously, and they did not.
[24:06] And, he had warned them judgment would come. And, it did. And, though they are being punished for their sin, and though there are real enemies that are being raised up to do this, here's what you've got to understand.

The Babylonians are not sovereign in the story. Accountable? Yes. Sovereign? No. This is the Lord's doing.
And, as hard as this is, this should bring you great comfort that even in the darkest days of the people of God, God was still sovereign.
He is still on His throne. It did not take away the pain. It did not take away the consequence. It did not make things easy. It did not prevent them from a thousand tears and sleepless nights, but it does remind them that no matter what happens in this world, our God still reigns.
They are afflicted because the Lord has afflicted her. Here's why. For the multitude of her transgressions.
[25:25] Her children have gone away captives before the foe. The reason for this judgment is because of their sin.

And yet, the power of God is still at work even in their darkest day. Let me just show you with the text. Verse 5, the Lord has afflicted.
Look at verse 12. Second part of verse 12. Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me which the Lord inflicted.
Verse 13. From on high he sent fire. Verse 14. My transgressions were bound into a yoke. By his hand they were fastened together.
Here's what you cannot escape in the book of Lamentations. Real people made real decisions to disobey the Lord. It brought real consequence. Real enemies came and defeated them and yet over all of that is the umbrella of the providence and the sovereignty of God.
[26:42] Here's what I must know at night. I must know at night that we have a God who is forever on his throne. Could judgment come to our country?

Brothers and sisters judgment has come to our country. Romans 1 makes that clear. If you want to know when judgment comes read Romans 1 compare it to the headlines you're living in it.
However his mercies are new every morning and great is his faithfulness and even when the judgment of God comes it reminds the people of God who have eyes to see it God is still the only all powerful one.

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I don't know what's going to happen in the stock market I don't know what's going to happen in the election I don't know what's going to happen in politics I don't know what's going to happen in the sense of world diplomacy I don't know what dangers and heartache come our way here's what I do know no matter what happens God is faithful to his people and God is always on the throne if I know that I'll sleep at night if you know that you can rest at night it doesn't take away your pain and it shouldn't it doesn't take away your tears and it shouldn't but through pain and through tears it reminds us we hope in God this is the Lord's doing first the third thing I want you to see is devastation we see this in verses 8 to 10 Jerusalem sinned grievously that's the purpose for the devastation the purpose for the judgment is because of their sin that was the problem they sinned Jerusalem sinned grievously therefore she became filthy that's what sin does the sin has piled up the people the city has become a filthy people God gave a word of warning they turned their back they rebelled God gave them profits they ignored it and God brought judgment look at verse 8 again therefore she became filthy all who honored her despise her for they have seen her nakedness she herself groans and turns her face away this is the result of our sin they are exposed they are naked they are uncovered they are vulnerable verse 9 her uncleanness was in her skirts [29:42] I don't think I have to give a lot of explanation what's going on here they've lost all sense decency all sense of personal responsibility and the metaphoric poetic picture is of someone that is as thoroughly unclean without any care and fully exposed and despised she took no thought of her future therefore her fall is terrible she has no comforter oh lord behold my affliction for the enemy has triumphed the metaphor in verse 9 is someone with a complete indifference to honorable living

I'll leave it at that if you need help talk to me afterwards one on one but that's the metaphoric poetic picture of complete indifference to anything that is honorable and decent verse four we see the fourth thing in verse 11 we see is the depth of the pain this is a deep penetrating pain verse 11 all her people groan as they search for bread they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength look oh lord and see for I am despised you know what this is about what good is gold when you cannot eat what good is a diamond when you have no bread this is a nation that has put their hope in themselves in their status and has turned their back on god is it nothing to you all you who pass by look and see this verse 12 if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me which the
Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger the sorrow is so deep the city is saying is there anyone that hurts like this this is a deep sense of pain verse 13 from on high he sent fire into my bones he made it descend have you ever hurt friend have you ever had a pain that was a burden that was so heavy it was just as if your bones themselves were on fire you just couldn't get away from the pain and the heartache and it's just every part of your being feels the burden and the weight that's what's happening here he spread a net for my feet he turned me back he has left me stunned I faint all the day long three metaphors in verse 13 there's a sense of fire in the bones that hurts there's a net probably a reference to not fishing but probably a reference to a captor's net that that that takes an enemy and and gathers them and pulls them and drags them away and then the city feels faint all the day long the word faint can mean to feel ill it can also mean to bleed out lost all my strength my transgressions were bound into a yoke by his hand they were fastened together they were set up on my neck he caused my strength to fail the
Lord gave me into the hands of those whom I cannot withstand the Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst he summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men the Lord has trodden as in a wine press the virgin daughter of Judah for these things I weep my eyes flow with tears for me has prevailed Zion stretches out her hands but there is none to comfort her the Lord has commanded against Jacob that his neighbors should be his foes Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them every part of their being is crushed the neighbors who used to care no longer do those who used to protect and defend no longer do those who used to love them no longer do those who used to esteem them now laugh at them this nation once the hope and the glory of the area now has become a filthy people which leads to a fifth thing in verses 18 to 22 and that's a declaration and I want you to see three things here as we prepare for the
Lord's table tonight three things in declaration number one it's in verse 18 the Lord is in the right just make note of that the Lord is right there's no plea of innocence no thought of being treated unjustly God was right to punish their sin let me just say to you dear friends when your heart's broken whether it's because of your own sin whether it's because of the sin of our nation whatever it may be when you find yourself crushed here's where you start God is right Genesis 18 25 the judge of

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the earth will do what is right you ask me how come this and why not this and how long this I will tell you as your friend and as your pastor there are things that you go through and
[36:19] I can't tell you why or how long or why you I don't know but I will affirm with all of my heart what scripture itself affirms even in the darkest day the Lord is right see in your theology of suffering you've got to have a place to start you've got to have a rock to put your feet and while you're swimming around trying to figure out how long does this storm last and why are we going to this storm and it's our family again and haven't we been through enough and why another diagnosis and why another casket and why another grievance and why another betrayal and how much more can I take and why is this happening and we've tried to live right and we've tried to honor you and look at all that we've done in ministry and look at how much we've sacrificed

God why us I don't know but let's start with what we do know our God is true he's right and that's where you start take away all your questions not at all do away with your pain and tears no but you've got to have a place to start you've got to have a place that you plant your feet and you say no matter what's going on around me the world will not confuse me on this our God is right he is faithful he is true he is just he can be trusted and I may not know what he's doing I may not understand why he's doing it I may not even emotionally like what I'm having to go through but I will start with this declaration our God is right verse 18 the Lord is right for I have rebelled against his word but hear all you peoples and see my suffering my young women and my young men have gone into captivity
I called to my lovers and they deceived me my priests and elders perished in the city while they sought food to revive! their strength what are they saying in verse 18 they are guilty I have rebelled against his word here's the declaration God is right and we are sinners you've got to understand that that does not mean that every time you get sick it's because you sinned it doesn't mean that if you get a diagnosis it's because God has punished you for something you've done it doesn't mean that when the storm blows off your shingles or blows down your fence you've got to figure out what did you do wrong that's not the point here's the point we are sinners we have rebelled and we on our own do not deserve perfection and yet in our darkest day when we're as sinful as we could be our
God is a God of mercy now there are times where people experience the consequences of their sin that's true if you drink and drive and you crash your car into a wall and you're hurt and now you've got a car that's totaled and now no one will insure you it's true that sometimes our consequences are a direct result of our sin but even when that's the case as the people of God we do not rejoice when somebody else falls the Bible tells us Proverbs 24 verse 17 do not rejoice when your enemy falls let not your heart be glad when he stumbles do not glory in somebody else's discipline even if it's just the consequence of what they've done you can say the
Lord is working the Lord is going to use this this is an invitation for them to repent I hope they learn the lesson all that is true but you don't need to pile on and add to their judgment the Lord will deal with that here's what we declare the Lord is right we are guilty!
[41:28] here's our third declaration the Lord keeps his word there's comfort here if you have the eyes to see it the Lord promised judgment would come and he kept his word why is that hopeful because the Lord also said he was a God of mercy and he also said he forgives sin and he also said he is going to send a redeemer now in Genesis 3 it's true that the Lord said in pain you will have children ladies did God keep his word in that any moms have any pain men the Lord said because of sin the ground will grow thorns and thistles in mustang those are goat head stickers you got any of those did God keep his word here's the good news for you if he kept his word about the pain and child bearing and the thorns of the ground you can trust he will keep his word to send his redeemer

Genesis 3 15 question did God send his redeemer yes he did is there another promise you and I are hoping for right now you bet he's coming back again how do we know he's going to God keeps his word so even in the midst of destruction you have brought the day that you announced God brings to pass what he promises let that be to us both a warning and an encouragement what do you do when judgment comes grieve you ought to grieve a bit repent you ought to confess your sin and you ought to seek God's mercy because our
God keeps his word and if verse 21 he brought about the judgment that he promised he would bring let's close in chapter 3 turn the page one time to the right chapter 3 verse 22 the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end they are new every morning great is your

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faithfulness amen here's what we declare the Lord is right we are sinful God keeps his word in heartache in discipline in judgment let that be your declaration God is good I'm a sinner my God keeps his promise he kept his promise to send his son he kept his promise to bring a redeemer he will keep his promise to come again that where he is we will be with him would you bow your head and close your eyes with me tonight as we prepare to receive the elements last the deacons of our church to come forward and let me give you church just a moment to pray and prepare your heart before we receive the word!

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