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Jesscia: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart. We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson.

I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger. They are both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers.

All right, guys, let's get started. David, where are we in the church here?

David: We are at the sixth Sunday after Pentecost, the time when the church celebrates the working of Holy Spirit among God's people.

Jesscia: And Peter, what are the texts for this week?

Peter: The texts are from Lamentations 3, 2 Corinthians 8, Mark 5 and Psalm 30.

Jesscia: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would choose to preach about to determine who goes first.

When you guys were kids and it was summer like it is today, did your family go camping and did you like it?

If I like your answer, you get to go first.

David: Oh, I did not like it.

The only thing I did like was when we camped in the backyard.

Put a big sheet over the clothesline and we would camp in the backyard and we would all end up inside in the morning.

I loved that.

Peter: Yeah, I loved camping. I loved it as a kid. I loved it now.

Except when it is hot, sticky summer in Missouri, that is not the most delightful camping.

David: Oh, that is so rare.

Peter: That is right. I know, it never happens.

But camping when it is not hot and sticky is about as good as it gets.

Jesscia: Yes, I agree with you Peter. It has to be Chicago or farther north.

But then I love camping so you win and you get to go first.

Peter: Alright, alright.

Well, I am going to suggest that, well I would preach I think on Lamentations.

And maybe I will start by asking Jessica to read 21 through 23.

Jesscia: But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore I will hope in Him.

Peter: Thank you Jessica.

This one I am preaching on Lamentations.

And here is why.

It only appears once in the Lectionary.

In the three year Lectionary there is only one reading from Lamentations.

And it is great, but it is the part of Lamentations that is unlike the rest of the whole book.

David: Correct.

Peter: And so if you are going to preach on it, which I think you should.

David: You do not want them going home and opening Lamentations and saying, oh my gosh.

Peter: No you do I think. That is the thing.  
You actually have to read these verses in the context of the whole book.

David: To understand their beauty.

Peter: To understand their beauty and to understand what I think is an important message for Christians today.  
Well I would be curious, what do people, when they hear the word Lamentation.  
Do people even use that word today? Do they know what that word means? To lament?  
It is such a foreign concept I think in our culture.  
Because we are a culture of either whitewashing things with kind of nice sweet platitudes.  
Or we engage in just rage conversation.

David: Creating Lamentations.

Peter: We create Lamentations. We are good at starting them.  
But so the language of lament to me is a language we need to learn as the people of God.  
And that is actually I think maybe one way I might introduce this.  
Is to think about learning a new language.  
Our kids right now are doing the Duolingo.  
We have like a family thing where we have a challenge to see who can.  
I think my streak is at 20 days right now of doing a three minute German lesson.  
So several of our kids are doing that and they are having a lot of fun with it.  
But the idea of however you want to think about language.  
Learning the language of lament.  
That is maybe what I would call this sermon.  
Learning the language of lament.  
And I think this is an important idea.  
I heard someone say about Lamentations, the book one time.  
Suffering and silence is not a virtue.  
And maybe a flip side is suffering with a spew of rage.  
There is nothing virtuous about that either.  
But there is a lot of suffering I think in the world.  
There is a lot of suffering in the church. There is a lot of suffering in our lives.  
And if you don't speak Lamentation.  
If you don't speak lament.  
Then you are left with either silence.  
Or you are left with rage.  
Or some sort of dismissal with nice platitude words.

David: Or you think something is wrong with you.  
That you shouldn't be feeling this way.  
You shouldn't be thinking these things.  
You shouldn't be saying. You don't know what to do with them.

Peter: So maybe another language would be negative self talk.

David: Right.

Peter: Or self accusation.  
So there is a number of things you can do with suffering.  
A number of ways you can speak. Or be silent.  
But there is a rich collection of Lamentation in the scriptures.  
So Christians need to learn the Godly, Divinely inspired language of Lamentation.

David: And you know it is kind of beautiful.  
I love the idea of your thinking about this as an opportunity.

To introduce them not just to the book of Lamentations.  
But to this practice of lament.  
And then you begin to see how there are kind of small laments that happen.  
Jesus laments over Jerusalem.  
So then you begin to see them in other places in scripture.  
Where it is happening kind of in the narration of a story.  
That is really good.

Peter:

And you can see it play out in the church too.  
Throughout history and our situation today.  
And so I actually could imagine doing a series on Lamentations.  
Or a Lent series or something.  
But since it came up in the Lectionary.  
I will jump on this opportunity to introduce this idea of the language of lament.  
So you have got to do a little bit of broadening in terms of the text.  
Because the Lectionary gives us the very few positive words of hope in the whole book.  
If you look through, and I would recommend to any pastor who is thinking about this.  
Do just a short study on Lamentations.  
Spend an hour reading it and read a commentary or two.  
But it is all about, of course you have got to set the context.  
One of the reasons that sometimes preachers would shy away from this.  
Is you are going to have to talk about the Babylonian exile.  
And the siege of Jerusalem.  
And the fall of Jerusalem.  
And these are things that most Christians today are not quite as familiar with.  
So you can give a little bit of an introduction of what is going on in the people of God.  
They have had the promised land taken away from them.  
Justly, because they have been disobedient to God.  
They are being punished.  
But that makes the pain no less real.  
And the sorrow no less intense.  
And so there is the whole book of Lamentations is really a tragic cry to God.  
But in this reading there is hope.  
So what I want to recommend is dwelling on this.  
And I want to think about the language. Learning the language of lament.  
And so the language of lament comes with I think three things.  
One is it involves speaking honestly.  
About how hard it is.  
How bad it is.  
How sorry you are of your own contribution to the problem.  
We are kind of conditioned to try to only say nice things to God.  
Or about God.  
But to say things like, God, you are not showing up.  
You are not answering these prayers.  
I prayed and I begged and nothing.  
And I want people to learn how to lament to God.  
To speak to Him honestly.  
It is also to speak with hope though.  
And this is where I really lean into the text.

There is some beautiful...

Would you read a couple of these verses Jessica?

Let's start with verse 24 and 25.

Jesscia: The Lord is my portion said my soul therefore I will hope in Him.

The Lord is good to those who wait for Him. To the soul who seek Him.

Peter: Maybe 31-33.

Jesscia: For the Lord will not cast off forever. But thou He will cause grief He will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For He does not afflict from His heart or grieve the children of men.

Peter: So this part of the lamentation is there is this language of hope.

That we know God you are good.

We know your steadfast love endures.

We trust your promises.

Which go all the way back of course to Abraham.

All the way back to Genesis.

And so when you are speaking honestly to God about your suffering.

You are also speaking words of hope.

Recalling for God His promises.

Not that He needs us to recall them for Him.

But I think we need to learn to recall God's promises when we are suffering.

David: Well I think that is part of grieving.

When you grieve as a Christian.

There is foundational things about God.

That you will affirm and assert even though everything in the world denies Him.

That God is good and that He loves you.

And that what He is doing is the best for you.

And everything is going against that.

And yet I am going to keep saying it because I believe it.

Even though I have no evidence in my mind that is persuading me in the midst of this grief.

Peter: And the way you said that I believe it.

This is the language of faith.

The cry of faith is that I believe it even when I don't see anything.

Any evidence to support it.

And that belief only comes from the promise.

And this is where of course in every sermon you are proclaiming the promises of God in Christ.

And this is the promise that even after Easter God has been faithful to His promises in Jesus.

All the promises of God are yes in Christ.

And His promise to return and to renew and to restore and to wipe away every tear.

Those are promises that we live by.

And so I would want to speak and encourage my listeners to speak the language of hope.

So it is a lament that is honest.

It is a lament that is hopeful.

And then I would go from there to thinking about it is language that is helpful.

And this helpful one is what is interesting is Lamentations 3 is almost all first person and singular pronouns.

So there is not a collective.

There is not a community.

And so all the language in this section.  
What is interesting when you go to Lamentations 5 the whole chapter is communal.  
It is still very heart wrenching.  
Chapter 5 is in the end of Lamentations it ends on this kind of question to God.  
Are you going to be there?  
But the whole Chapter 5 is about the community speaking to each other.  
And so I would want to, I want people to be honest to God.  
I want them to speak hopefully.  
And I also want them to be helpful to each other with their words.  
And so this gets into not only hearing the promise that you proclaim as a preacher.  
But now we speak that to one another.  
And we share that, we speak the language together.  
The language of lament.

Jesscia: So that is where I want to help my congregation this week learn to speak the language of lament.  
We didn't talk about this before we recorded Peter.  
But on the other podcast that I produced, Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived.  
I talked with a student who did his PhD thesis on the language of lament.  
With Dr. Tim Saleska.  
And this, he is a second career guy.  
He was a high school teacher for years.  
And he said that he saw the need for high schoolers and people in the community to say,  
God help me this stinks.  
God help me I don't know where you are, help me.  
And he said that those statements were a statement of faith.  
Because why would you tell God if you didn't know he could do something.

Peter: Yeah.

Jesscia: But listen to that show guys.  
It's a whole 35 minutes on the language of lament.  
You can find it at [ConcordiaTheology.org](http://ConcordiaTheology.org).

David: David, what would you preach on?  
I would preach on the Gospel reading.

Jesscia: Yay, hooray!  
David: Uh oh, uh oh.

Why are you saying that?  
Jesscia: I love this story.

David: You do?  
What do you love about it?

Jesscia: Well, Jesus raises a little girl.  
He takes her by the hand, the little lamb get up.  
It's amazing.  
When I was a kid I loved it because I'm like, oh little girl like me.  
You know, right?

David: And then he tells you to give her something to eat, right?

Jesscia: Yes, yes.  
I love this story.  
This is one of the stories that most shows Jesus' character to me.  
Where if I wonder who is Jesus or does the Father really love me.

Jesus, if this is Jesus, this shows me so much about who He is.  
He had the parents in the room, he took her by the hand.  
He cared enough about her to wake up and have something to eat.  
It breaks my heart.  
This is who Jesus is.

David: This is one of those situations where you have this framing device.  
You're all involved in one story.

It's kind of like watching the movie and you're watching a movie and the story is going along.  
And then all of a sudden, boom, a new story erupts and you're kind of like,  
no, I want to get back to the other one.  
I got to get back to the other one.  
And so then you get the other one at the end.  
So you got this sandwich, right?  
You've got the story of Jesus and Jairus and the little girl, his daughter.  
And then in the middle you have this other story of this woman,  
very, very destitute and in a desperate situation.  
She's spent all of her money.  
She's had this for 12 years.  
She's not getting better.  
It's just horrible.  
And she kind of takes center stage and interrupts everything.  
And then you go back to the original story.  
So I'm interested in the middle story.  
And I'm interested in it mainly because of the interruption.  
So I would probably think of titling the sermon Sacred Interruptions  
because I'm like really, really bad with interruptions.  
In my mind, I have the value of the work that I'm doing.  
And the interruption comes.  
I'm resentful of it.  
And I want to get rid of it as quickly as possible.  
I just want to kind of get it done.  
And this story for me invites us to imagine that God is sometimes there in the margins.  
He's sometimes there in the interruptions, causing us and calling us to see him at work.  
And so when you look at this story, I think there's like,  
I kind of probably think about the sermon in two different ways that interruptions happen  
or two different things you see in interruptions.  
With the idea that sometimes the most important thing that may happen in a day  
is something you had never planned  
and something that just kind of came out of nowhere  
and sucked up a whole bunch of energy and time.

Jesscia: I had a boss who called that the Ministry of Interruptions.

David: Yeah, there you go. That's the idea.

Peter: Yeah, I read when I was a young pastor, I read something along those lines.  
It was written by a Catholic priest, and I remember what journal it was in.  
But he talked about an important transition for him in ministry  
was to stop seeing interruptions to what he was working on,  
not as interruptions to his ministry, but to being in his ministry.

So this is one of those where I would imagine preachers might take this message to heart for themselves

as much as they would for years.

David: Right, it happens all the time, right?

I mean, Sunday morning, service is done, you're shaking hands, and then you've got to run over and do the Bible class, and somebody interrupts you on the way, and all of a sudden you're like, wow.

Peter: Yeah, right.

David: We need to delve into this more.

And it's a way of beginning to see God working in unexpected places.

And I think the first aspect of the interruption that to me is important

is the depth of need from which this woman is coming, right,

and the depth of faith that she has when she interrupts Jesus.

Because if I'm in my world and I've got my plans and somebody interrupts my plans,

I'm usually thinking of my world and my plans, and I'm not thinking of the other person's world.

And Mark is asking us for a moment to look at this woman's world.

Jessica, could you read verse 27 through 29?

She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, if I touch even His garment I will be made well.

And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

David: So I love this moment. So this woman has heard reports, so she's heard the word about Jesus and people being healed.

But then she kind of just makes up this thing.

Peter: Yeah, right.

You know, if I touch the edge of his garments, I'm going to be healed.

Really? I mean, where did you hear that?

I don't have that recorded anywhere, right?

I mean, it's like she, her faith causes her to make up this proposition that if I just touch the edge of his garments, I'm going to be healed.

And then she does, and she is healed.

So there's, you know, normally with healing miracles, there's somebody interceding, right?

I mean, it's either a father interceding for a daughter,

or a friend's interceding for a friend, or, you know, somebody interceding.

This woman's kind of done it all.

Her faith, she's heard this word, she does it, and it works.

And so we see this huge depth of need on the part of this woman, and this huge amount of courage.

Mark focuses on the fact that she's had this for 12 years,

which parallels her with the little girl who's 12 years old.

So the entire time this little child has been alive, this woman's been suffering.

How horrible her life has been, and yet think about how courageous her faith is, right?

That she hears this word and says, oh, if I just touch his garment, I'm going to be healed, and goes there and does it.

Peter: What's interesting is, and I don't know if you'd want to go on the sermon, but it's just an interesting contrast.

You point out the 12 years and the 12 years with the girl and the flow of blood.

The other, the contrast between the ruler of the synagogue, this important man, who you actually get almost nothing about him and my little girl's point of death. So there's a very important man that asks for Jesus, and he trusts Jesus too. But then Mark gives us someone at the opposite end of the spectrum, and he invites us to see the world from her perspective.

David: And if you slow it down, if you slow down the story, and you realize that this is all happening behind the scenes, all of the sudden Mark opens a little window upon this woman's heart, and her faith, and her life, and he's kind of saying, look, this is what's in the margins.

People who have suffered much, people who are desperate, and people who have heard a word, and for some crazy reason, trust it, and they're healed.

And it's like, wow, that's the kind of stuff that's going on in the margins.

Well, I'm going around in my daily business.

And so I think the first kind of sacred interruption in this text is happening to me, kind of a de-centering to me that can happen here,

and invite me to look for God working in the marginalized spaces,

in the marginalized voices, rather than always where I'm sure he's working,

and I'm in charge, and I'm doing what I need to do.

Peter: And depending on your congregation, there's certainly people in your congregation who are the marginalized.

And so you're opening their eyes to the people around them,

as well as helping them name their own suffering and hurt for those who don't feel seen at all.

Jesscia: Yes, that's why I love this story, because sometimes I don't feel like I could just go to God's face and ask for help,

but maybe if I could just touch this garment just in the back, that's all I need, just the crumbs from the table, right?

David: Right. Yeah, so that's the first interruption.

And then the second interruption is done by Jesus.

So Jessica, if you could read from verse 30 through 34.

Jesscia: And Jesus preciveing in Himself that power had gone out from Him immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garment?

And His disciples said to Him, you see the crowd pressing around you and yet you say who touched me?

And He looked around to see who had done it but he woman knowing what happened to her came in fear and trembling and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

And He said to her, daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace be healed of your disease.

David: Okay, I just love this part.

Jesscia: Me too, me too.

David: I know. What do you like about it?

Jesscia: He didn't leave her hiding.

David: Right.

Jesscia: It's like she wanted to hide, but he's like, you don't need to hide.

David: Right. And then this super courageous woman has fear and trembling when she now comes forward and comes in the public.

That's when you get the beautiful thing where Jesus says to her daughter,



so, you know, you've got the gyrus's daughter, and now Jesus calls her daughter, that she's a daughter of God,

and he lets her know that she has faith and that the faith that she has is powerful and has made her well.

The beauty of this is that this second interruption is an interruption that gives this woman more than a miracle.

If she had gone away, all she would have had was that miracle,

and she would never have known about the faith that she has and the way in which that faith is saving.

And Jesus interrupts her life so that she walks away with more than a miracle.

Peter: I like that phrase, more than a miracle, because it directs attention to the continuity between here's today and this woman.

David: Right.

Peter: Because those who aren't healed still have more than that miracle.

They have the gift of faith and the life that comes with that too.

And so it would be a way you can connect to people who still continue to struggle.

David: Yeah, and him calling her a daughter.

Right, that regardless of what's going on in your life, you're a son and you're a daughter of God, and you have more than a miracle, you have faith.

Peter: Well, I know this is a Lectionary Kickstart, and we're generally sticking with the lectionary point in readings,

but this is one of those times when I think it would be really cool to preach in the same text multiple weeks in a row,

because there's so much going on here.

David: Oh, you've got so much.

You can go from the perspective of the bleeding woman like you talked about.

You could also have another whole sermon with the little girl at the bookends,

and then you could even have another sermon where you reflected on the disciples' experience of this whole thing.

David: Right, seeing the many different ways in which you've been able to do that.

And the way in which Jesus is working.

And if you were going to go with kind of the Jairus and his daughter portion,

I mean, like Jessica was saying, the compassion of Jesus, the human care that he shows,

and the tenderness, all of those details of how he's ministering in need in that situation,

those are beautiful things to draw out.

And it's one of those cases where the text is just, there's just too much here.

There's just too much here.

And it's always good to have more than you need when you're preaching.

Jesscia: And if you don't make it a sermon series, you could give it to us as a Bible study series.

Peter: There you go.

Jesscia: That would be fabulous.

Three Sundays of getting to study this story, give this to me in a Bible study, please.

Well, that's all for today.

We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at [ConcordiaTheology.org](http://ConcordiaTheology.org).

Check it out.

While you're there, you'll also find episodes of our other podcast,

Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived.

This is the show that I mentioned to Peter.

It has the Language of Lament episode in it.

You can find more episodes of Lectionary Kickstart and Tangible on any of the major podcast apps.

Join us next week here at Lectionary Kickstart when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

David: You don't want them going home and opening Lamentations and saying, oh my gosh.