



### **Lent reflection for March 27, 2024**

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#### **Lamentations 2:1-9**

How the Lord in his anger  
has humiliated daughter Zion!  
He has thrown down from heaven to earth  
the splendor of Israel;  
he has not remembered his footstool  
in the day of his anger.

The Lord has destroyed without mercy  
all the dwellings of Jacob;  
in his wrath he has broken down  
the strongholds of daughter Judah;  
he has brought down to the ground in dishonor  
the kingdom and its rulers.

He has cut down in fierce anger  
all the might of Israel;  
he has withdrawn his right hand from them  
in the face of the enemy;  
he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,  
consuming all around.

He has bent his bow like an enemy,  
with his right hand set like a foe;  
he has killed all those  
in whom we took pride  
in the tent of daughter Zion;  
he has poured out his fury like fire.

The Lord has become like an enemy;  
he has destroyed Israel.

He has destroyed all its palaces,  
laid in ruins its strongholds,  
and multiplied in daughter Judah  
mourning and lamentation.

He has broken down his booth like a garden;  
he has destroyed his tabernacle;  
the Lord has abolished in Zion  
festival and Sabbath  
and in his fierce indignation has spurned  
king and priest.

The Lord has scorned his altar,  
disowned his sanctuary;  
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy  
the walls of her palaces;  
a clamor was raised in the house of the Lord  
as on a day of festival.

The Lord determined to lay in ruins  
the wall of daughter Zion;  
he stretched the line;  
he did not withhold his hand from destroying;  
he caused rampart and wall to lament;  
they languish together.

Her gates have sunk into the ground;  
he has ruined and broken her bars;  
her king and princes are among the nations;  
guidance is no more,  
and her prophets obtain  
no vision from the Lord.

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### **Today's Reflection is by Max Thorn**

Imagine the Brooklyn Bridge as a pile of stones at the bottom of the East River. Picture the Empire State Building, lights off, windows boarded up. Prospect Park, overgrown. Our lovely little wooden church building with the roof caved in and the front door hanging off its hinges, red paint chipped and fading. It's bleak. I get anxious just thinking about it. Translating the prophet's lament for Zion into New York City drives home the emotions behind the imagery in this passage.

Prophets, like the author of the book of Lamentations, are interpreters. They help people understand God, which, unsurprisingly, people are generally more interested in doing when times are hard. In this passage, the prophet responds to the people's sense of abandonment. Why us? Why must we suffer? Where is God? Even, perhaps a bit scandalously: why has God turned against us? What the hell just happened?

“Guidance is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the Lord.” There’s a dimness here, and a lack of direction. The future is obscure. The feeling of what might happen next is unbearable when something they’ve been so certain of has been uprooted, overturned, ransacked. They’re suffering.

Each year during Holy Week, our liturgies challenge us to imagine the uncertainty felt by Jesus’s disciples, and especially his blessed mother Mary, in the days of his passion before his resurrection. As the events of what we now call Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday unfolded, I wonder how many times the disciples and Mary asked themselves, “What happens next?” Christ tried to warn them of the impending struggles but I can’t blame them for not really coming to grips with it until it was all happening. Scripture tells us that even Christ himself felt isolation and rejection during his passion, and this is another parallel to the Lamentations passage. Christ in his passion reflects Zion destroyed: humiliated, broken down, scorned.

We, of course, know what happens next in that story: Christ’s resurrection and victory over death. It’s why we’re Christians. But let’s not be too eager to fast forward past these last few days of Lent. All the better, then, that this passage from Lamentations weighs heavily on me. It slows my tempo, like a funeral dirge. This week, I’ll challenge myself to live with that uncertainty, if only for a few more days.



Max Thorn is our Ministry Associate at Holy Apostles. Max comes to us from All Saints Park Slope, where he sang in the choir, served as an acolyte and a lector, and organized a Daily Office prayer group. He is currently in the diocesan discernment process to become a priest. He previously worked as an academic librarian at Queens College-City University of New York, where he was also an active organizer in his labor union. He is married and lives in Crown Heights.