

# Leader Guide



**Speaker:** Pastor Casey Scott

**Series:** Forgotten Ornaments

**Title:** Recalling Lament

**Key Texts:** Matthew 2:13–18; Jeremiah 31:7–17

**Big Idea:**

*In Jesus, God Himself willingly entered into our sorrow in order to give us His joy.*

## Sermon Outline

Use this section to briefly review the sermon before you dive into questions.

### Introduction – Christmas in a “Minor Key”

- Our culture expects Christmas to always be bright, happy, and “major key.”
- But many experience grief, loss, loneliness, or tension during the holidays.
- The biblical Christmas story includes deep sorrow and lament right in the middle of the joy.
- Lament is a “forgotten ornament” that actually hangs on the bough of hope in Christ.

### God Enters Our Sorrow When Our Plans Get Changed (Matthew 2:13–15)

- Joseph’s life keeps getting rearranged by God’s plan:
  - First with Mary’s pregnancy... then with the command to flee to Egypt... then with the call to return.
- Jesus, before age two, is an immigrant and a refugee because of political oppression.
- This fulfills Hosea 11:1 (“Out of Egypt I called my son”) and ties Jesus to Israel’s story.
- Truth: God often changes our plans because He has a bigger *redemptive mission* in view—for Jesus and for us.
- Practices from the sermon:
  1. **Pray and Wait** – ask God for insight into His mission and be patient.
  2. **Obey and Abide** – do what you *do* know to do, and lean into relationship with Him.

### God Enters Our Sorrow When Life Is Unfair (Matthew 2:16–18; Jeremiah 31:7–17)

- Herod’s massacre of the boys in and around Bethlehem is horrific and unjust.
- Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15 (Rachel weeping) to name the grief—but the *context* of Jeremiah 31 is hope, restoration, and joy.
- God has entered a world of injustice and evil, not from a distance, but in the flesh, in Jesus.

- Truth: God can place even the most unfair chapters of our lives inside a larger melody of joy and justice.
- Practices from the sermon:
  1. **Trust that God will do the right thing** – keep singing praise “in a minor key.”
  2. **Participate in God’s redemptive mission** – work for goodness and justice, even when life isn’t fair to you.

## Looking Ahead – From Lament to Joy (Revelation 21:3–4)

- One day, God will wipe away every tear—no more death, mourning, crying, or pain.
- Until then, Jesus laments *with* us and calls us to:
  - Enter the lament of others,
  - Live in the joy He gives,
  - And share that joy as we join His redemptive work.

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## Group Discussion Guide:

### Heart – Personal Reflection & Emotion

(“How does this land in *me*?”)

1. **Christmas in a Minor Key**  
When you think about this Christmas season, does it feel more like a “major key” (celebratory) or a “minor key” (heavy, tense, sorrowful) right now? Why?
2. **Changed Plans**  
Share a time when your plans were radically changed (recently or in the past).
  - How did that feel emotionally—frustration, fear, grief, relief, something else?
  - Looking back, where do you see God in that story... or where do you *wish* you could see Him?
3. **Naming Lament**  
Is there an area of your life right now where you need to give yourself permission to lament—something you tend to ignore or minimize?
  - What would it look like to bring that honestly before God instead of pretending it’s “fine”?
4. **Feeling the Unfairness**  
Where does life feel “not fair” to you right now?
  - How do you typically respond—anger, numbness, comparison, despair, denial?
5. **Joy in the Dark**  
Can you identify a time when joy and sorrow were both present in your life at the same time?
  - What did God feel like in that moment—close, distant, confusing, surprising?

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### Head – Scripture, Belief, and Understanding

(“What do I need to understand, see, or rethink?”)

1. **Read the Texts Together**  
Read Matthew 2:13–18 and Jeremiah 31:7–17 out loud.
  - What words or images stand out to you?
  - How does hearing Jeremiah’s *full* context change how you hear the verse Matthew quotes?

**2. Jesus the Refugee**

In what ways does it matter that Jesus began life as a refugee/immigrant under political threat?

- How does that shape your view of what “God with us” really means?

**3. Plans and Mission**

The sermon emphasized that God changed Joseph’s plans because He had a larger redemptive mission for Jesus—and for us.

- How does that challenge a view of God who exists mainly to make *our* plans succeed?
- What might it mean that *your* life is part of God’s redemptive mission?

**4. Lament and Faith**

Many Christians feel like lament and strong faith are opposites.

- From these passages, how would you define biblical lament?
- How might lament actually *express* trust rather than contradict it?

**5. Unfairness and Justice**

Herod’s violence and Rachel’s weeping raise honest questions about justice.

- How do Matthew 2 and Jeremiah 31 together speak to the tension between present injustice and future joy?
- How does Revelation 21:3–4 complete that picture?

**6. God’s Character in Sorrow**

Based on this sermon and these texts, complete this sentence and discuss:

“In my sorrow, God is not \_\_\_\_\_, He is \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Hands – Practice, Mission, and Next Steps

(“What should I *do* in response to this?”)

**1. Pray & Wait (This Week’s Rhythm)**

Where is one place your plans have changed and you’re still confused?

- As a group, name *one* situation each and commit to:
  - Praying specifically for insight into God’s redemptive mission in that area, and
  - Practicing patient waiting instead of grasping for control.
- How will you remind yourself to do this during the week?

**2. Obey & Abide (The Next Clear Step)**

Even if the big picture is unclear, there are usually *clear* things God has already told us to do (forgive, serve, tell the truth, pursue reconciliation, seek justice, etc.).

- What is one small, concrete act of obedience you sense God calling you to this week?
- How will that help you “abide” in Him rather than just manage circumstances?

**3. Entering Someone Else’s Lament**

The sermon challenged us to enter the lament of others.

- Who in your life is currently living in a “minor key”?
- What is one way you can show up this week—listening, presence, practical help, prayer—without trying to “fix” them or rush them to joy?

**4. Practicing Trust When Life Is Unfair**

Think of one specific unfair situation (personal or global) that weighs on you.

- What is one tangible way you can *trust* God (e.g., praying regularly for justice, refusing to retaliate, choosing integrity) and one tangible way you can *participate* in His redemptive mission (e.g., advocacy, generosity, serving)?

## 5. **Group Prayer Practice**

End your time with a short, guided prayer:

- Name specific laments in the group.
- Ask Jesus to sit with you in them.
- Ask the Spirit to give each person one step of obedience or mission to walk out in the coming week.
- Thank God for the promise of Revelation 21, even as you live in Matthew 2.