Psalm 137:1-6

[1] By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. [2] There on the poplars we hung our harps, [3] for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" [4] How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?[5] If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. [6] May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

As I read this Psalm, I find myself looking at a people who find themselves captive in the land of Babylon. They are in an overwhelming and oppressive situation. These circumstances are beyond their control and this is a moment in their history when everything in their lives has been turned upside down. Their future hopes have been extinguished because of a social-political reality they cannot undo. Babylon is not Jerusalem, and the memories of a former home linger in the hearts and minds of these exiles. Babylon is a warring nation bent on world conquest; Israel has become its casualty of world conquest.

This Psalm speaks to the question "how does one deal with a sadness that permeates the lives of a people?" Psalm 137:1 says, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." The Psalmist remembers their place of worship. They remember going to the Temple to worship. A place where they called on God to intervene, to come to their rescue. The Temple no longer

exists. They no longer have a “Rock” to hold to, a “Rock to trust in.” Their faith is shaken, if not broken. The Temple, the place where God lived, the foundation they once believed to be impregnable, because God lived there has been destroyed. How do they handle the emotional and spiritual chaos they find themselves in this moment of struggle? In the midst of this chaos, some sort of spiritual order, some sort of spiritual comfort, or strength is sought. This kind of suffering is too overwhelming to withstand alone. When we find ourselves in moments such as these. We need to know that there is an order beyond our present reality that we can turn to.

Today, this year and seven years prior we too have been overwhelmed by confusion and chaos. A confusion that hangs in the air. We can’t see it but we feel it. We know it’s there. We await each day waiting for the conclusion, for an end to this madness. The structures we once trusted in appear to be on the verge of collapsing. Truth is no longer a valued commodity. The “lie” has become a tool that is used without limitations to step on the truth, and extinguish its virtues in order to achieve criminal ends. We see the injustice of the rich and powerful run rampant without any serious redress. While our courts – the last hope of our democracy – is being held hostage by a political and ideological mentality that seems determined to destroy this country by returning Black people back to the days of “Jim Crow.”

Israel’s captors demanded of them a song. They demanded that they be content in that strange land. They demanded that they embrace their captors and enjoy their political slavery. A slavery that proved real in the living of their lives. Psalm 137 4-6 “**(4) How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? (5)If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,**

let my right hand forget her cunning. (6)If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." This gives the answers we so desperately need in times like these when everything we hold dear hangs in the balance. What do we do? When the foundations that once held us secure begin to collapse. **What do we do? To whom can we turn?** The Psalmist makes it very clear in the midst of uncertainty – even uncertainty of national proportions. We can **still trust in God**. Yes, the Temple is destroyed; I cannot see that symbol of God in my life, but I will continue to trust Him. I will remember what God has already done for me and trust God will do it again. I will remember whom I have called upon in my time of trouble and I will call upon God again.

After expressing deep suffering, hope is finally offered. However, this hope relies not on human achievement or triumphalism but instead on God's grace. They remind themselves of the faithfulness of God. They remind themselves that God is still on the throne. These verses do not emphasize the human ability to change or turn around their circumstances but instead focus on the character of God to bring about change. The God of history is still in charge. Though the day appears dark and hopeless. There is a God of hope whose words still ring true in the darkest of moments. God's word tells us "**Weeping, chaos and confusion, heartbreak, disappointment, despair may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning**."

Our hope is dependent on who God is rather than who we are.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool