

Blessed are *they that . . .*

MOURN

LENTEN EVENING PRAYER
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Text is from Matthew 23:

*'Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
the city that kills the
prophets and stones
those who are sent to it!
How often have I desired
to gather your children
together as a hen gathers
her brood under her
wings, and you were not
willing! See, your house is
left to you, desolate. For I
tell you, you will not see
me again until you say,
"Blessed is the one who
comes in the name of
the Lord." '*

Jesus wept.

Maybe you've been in on the joke confirmants make when they're told to memorize a Bible verse and pick this since it's the shortest.

Jesus was moved to empathy with hurting, grieving people throughout his ministry.

Mothers with dead sons; women bleeding for many years; lepers excluded from their communities because of fear of their illness, people marginalized for all sorts of reasons, physical, mental, economic,

Perhaps you come tonight carrying some personal griefs of loss: divorces and deaths and diagnosis and jobs.

Loss of relationships and loss of function and loss of identity.

Jesus grieves with you, walks beside you, holds you.

And Jesus also grieves over the state of the world that brought about this loss and grief.

When before his passion he sees Jerusalem, the Holy City, and the way it epitomizes the lack of living in God's presence, he grieves.

Scripture relates: when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

Perhaps in this election season, you are drawn to join Jesus in weeping over the state of the world.

Blessed are they that mourn

But whether tonight you bring your personal griefs or our communal griefs or both to God in prayer, we are invited to meditate on the promise of Jesus;

Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted.

Congratulations to those who mourn, or as the Bible puts it, grieve over the self destruction of God's people;

those who mourn over the suffering in the world and who see that we humans are not living in the relationship to God that God intends.

Perhaps that was in your mind when you voted _____

We may as a society be the cause of our grief, we may as people not ready to trust God's promise to make all things whole may find ourselves mourning over loss.

Jesus grieved for our suffering, empathizing with the pain we live with.

As the prophet Isaiah said: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

He understands grief, and yet he promises that those enduring it will be comforted.

He promises us that God will comfort us, and how?

When we are broken-hearted we may feel that God is far away.

God's comfort comes when we trust God's promise that in Christ all things will come together, peace will prevail, the creation will be restored.

Perhaps like me you look at the problems in our country and our world that seem intractable, where it looks like changing one thing for the better makes several other things worse, and you are tempted to despair.

Jesus promises that he too sees these things, understands your grief, and holds you through the hard work of being a light and a comfort to others who mourn.

Grief can leave us feeling abandoned by God.

And yet the Bible assures us that the Lord is close to the broken-hearted.

Maybe we just don't know it at the time we are experiencing it, maybe it is only in hindsight that His presence is seen.

When people are asked to look back on their lives and share when they experienced the reality of God, they almost always tell about a period of suffering and loss.

Blessed are you who mourn, for it's an invitation to look for the nearness of God and be comforted.

May the comforting nearness of God bless your Lent. Amen