

Wednesday of Holy Week
Tenebrae – A Meditation for Holy Week

Stuart Forbes

Lesson 1: The Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet (1:1-14)

Aleph: Oh, no! She sits alone, the city that was once full of people! Once great among nations, she has become like a widow. Once a queen over provinces, she has become a slave.

Beth: She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears on her cheek. None of her lovers comfort her. All her friends lied to her; they have become her enemies.

Gimel: Judah was exiled after suffering and hard service. She lives among the nations; she finds no rest. All who were chasing her caught her—right in the middle of her distress.

Daleth: Zion's roads are in mourning; no one comes to the festivals. All her gates are deserted. Her priests are groaning, her young women grieving. She is bitter.

He: Her adversaries have become rulers; her enemies relax. Certainly the LORD caused her grief because of her many wrong acts. Her children have gone away, captive before the enemy.

Antiphon: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!*
The third candle is extinguished

Bonnie Kiermaier

Lesson 2: Continuation of Lamentations

Waw: Daughter Zion lost all her glory. Her officials are like deer that can't find pasture. They have gone away, frail, before the hunter

Zayin: While suffering and homeless, Jerusalem remembers all her treasures from days long past. When her people fell by the enemy's hand, there was no one to help her. Enemies saw her, laughed at her defeat.

Heth: Jerusalem has sinned greatly; therefore, she's become a joke. All who honored her now detest her, for they've seen her naked. Even she groans and turns away.

Teth: Her uncleanness shows on her clothing; she didn't consider what would happen to her. She's gone down shockingly; she has no comforter. "LORD, look at my suffering—the enemy has definitely triumphed!"

Antiphon: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!*
The fourth candle is extinguished

Open

Lesson 3: Continuation of Lamentations

Yodh: The enemy grabbed all her treasures. She watched nations enter her sanctuary—nations that you, God, commanded: They must not enter your assembly.

Kaph: All her people are groaning, seeking bread. They give up their most precious things for food to survive. “LORD, look and take notice: I am most certainly despised.”

Lamedh: Is this nothing to all you who pass by? Look around: Is there any suffering like the suffering inflicted on me, the grief that the LORD caused on the day of his fierce anger?

Mem: From above he sent fire into my bones; he trampled them. He spread a net for my feet; he forced me backward. He left me devastated, constantly sick.

Nun: My steps are being watched; by his hand they are tripped up. His yoke is on my neck; he makes my strength fail. My Lord has handed me over to people I can't resist.

Antiphon: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!*

The fifth candle is extinguished

Chip Saunders

Lesson 4: A Reading from the Treatise of Saint Augustine, the Bishop on the Psalms.

Hear my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my petition. Listen to me and answer me. I mourn in my trial and am troubled. These are the words of one disquieted, in trouble and anxiety. He prays under much suffering, desiring to be delivered from evil. Let us now see under what evil he lies; and when he begins to speak, let us place ourselves beside him, that, by sharing his tribulation, we may also join in his prayer. “I mourn in my trial,” he says, “and am troubled.” When does he mourn? When is he troubled? He says, “In my trial.” He has in mind the wicked who cause him suffering, and he calls this suffering his “trial.” Do not think that the evil are in the world for no purpose, and that God makes no good use of them. Every wicked person lives either that he may be corrected, or that through him the righteous may be tried and tested.

The sixth candle is extinguished

Open

Lesson 5: Continuation from the Treatise of Saint Augustine, the Bishop on the Psalms.

Would that those who now test us were converted and tried with us; yet though they continue to try us, let us not hate them, for we do not know whether any of them will persist to the end in their evil ways. And most of the time, when you think you are hating your enemy, you are hating your brother without knowing it. Only the devil and his angels are shown to us in the Holy Scriptures as doomed to eternal fire. It is only their amendment that is hopeless, and against them we wage a hidden battle. For this battle the Apostle arms us, saying, “We are not contending against flesh and blood,” that is, not against human beings whom we see, “but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.” So that you may not think that demons are the rulers of heaven and earth, he says, “of the darkness of this world.” He says, “of the world” meaning the lovers of the world—of the “world,” meaning the ungodly and wicked—the “world” of which the Gospel says, “And the world knew him not.”

The seventh candle is extinguished

Betty Sherman

Lesson 6: A Reading from Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews (4:15 – 5:3)

Because we don’t have a high priest who can’t sympathize with our weaknesses, but instead one who was tempted in every way the same that we are, except without sin. Finally, let’s draw near to the throne of favor with confidence so that we can receive mercy and find grace when we need help. Every high priest is taken from the people and put in charge of things that relate to God for their sake, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The high priest is able to deal gently with the ignorant and those who are misled since he himself is prone to weakness. Because of his weakness, he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the people.

The eighth candle is extinguished

Audra Snowden

Lesson 7: Continuation of Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews (5:4-10) Betty Sherman

No one takes this honor for themselves but takes it only when they are called by God, just like Aaron. In the same way Christ also didn’t promote himself to become high priest. Instead, it was the one who said to him, “You are my Son. Today I have become your Father;” as he also says in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” During his days on earth, Christ offered prayers and requests with loud cries and tears as his sacrifices to the one who was able to save him from death. He was heard because of his godly devotion. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. After he had been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him. He was appointed by God to be a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. *The ninth candle is extinguished*

Meredith Guzman

Lesson 8: Song of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:10-20)

I said: In the noontide of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look upon mortals no more among the inhabitants of the world. My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end; I cry for help until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end. Like a swallow or a crane I clamor, I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security! But what can I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. All my sleep has fled because of the bitterness of my soul. O Lord, by these things people live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh, restore me to health and make me live! Surely it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but you have held back my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. For Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you; those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living, they thank you, as I do this day; fathers make known to children your faithfulness. The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord.

Antiphon: O Death, I will be your death; O Grave, I will be your destruction.

The eleventh candle is extinguished,

Janet Forbes

Lesson 9: Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79)

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”