



**How To Return from Exile
March 22, 2020
Worship Guide**

Text: Lamentations 1:1-7

*How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal.*

*2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lover she has no one to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.*

*3 Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude;
she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.*

*4 The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals;
all her gates are desolate, her priests groan;
her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter.*

*5 Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper,
because the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away, captives before the foe.*

*6 From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty.
Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture;
they fled without strength before the pursuer.*

7 Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering,

*all the precious things that were hers in days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her,
the foe looked on mocking over her downfall.*

Call to Worship

In the midst of war and division, we wait for God:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end.

In the midst of devastation, loss and exile, we wait for God:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end.

In the midst of change and uncertainty, we wait for God:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness, O God!

Call to Confession

God answers those who seek mercy; salvation comes to those who wait for the Lord. Therefore, let us confess all we have done, and what we have not done, trusting in God's grace. Let us pray...

Confession

Merciful God, you have called us to live in faith and even to be willing to suffer for the gospel. We confess that we do not come before you with a clear conscience. Our faith is clouded by sin and uncertainty. We shrink from your call to live sacrificially on behalf of others. Too quickly, we seek our own ease and comfort first. We rely on our own power rather than yours. Forgive us, we pray. Take away from us a spirit of cowardice and restore to us the spirit of power rightly used, of love unconditionally offered, of self-discipline gracefully lived. In new mercy, forgive us and increase our faith.

Assurance

The Lord welcomes all who in true repentance return from the exile of self-interest. Friends, be at peace, for in Christ we find our way home again where all are forgiven, loved and restored. ***Thanks be to God! In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Amen.***

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, we wait in hope for you to speak. Come to us in Scripture read and proclaimed. By the power of your Spirit, increase our faith that we may do all we are commanded to do according to your glory. Amen.

Call for Offering

Before us is a world in great need, waiting in hope. We are a people holding treasure meant to be given away: the good news of Jesus Christ. Let us participate in God's steadfast love and mercy, by giving sacrificially to the needs of God's world. Our morning offering will now be received.

Dedication

Gracious God, you are good news for a weary world, hope for people in despair, home for those suffering exile. Accept, we pray, the offerings we bring. Use them according to your own good purposes and grace. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Sermon Notes

How the message speaks to me:

Questions I have:

Prayer requests:

