



Thornapple's Visionary Plan

Broken AND Beautiful

April 2023 Update: Year One

What do we do with lament going forward?

Lament is not a "one and done" activity. It is a regular Christian expression that the Church has practiced for centuries. The Bible tells stories of people lamenting, even Jesus. Lament fits in with giving thanks, seeking and offering forgiveness, asking God to heal, and reciting the creeds. It has become a more common part of our practice and language at Thornapple.

This year we recovered a part of our faith that most of us had little familiarity with. We acquired a fuller view of the world - ourselves and those around us. **We needed this at the beginning of our broken and beautiful journey.** The more we can name it in ourselves, the more we can walk with those in pain. The more we can see brokenness, the more we can walk toward it and appreciate its beauty while lamenting its existence.

We have a common humanity as broken and beautiful people, all desperately loved by God. This is an identity to share with those who do not walk with Jesus. Our faith provides us a productive expression and practice when encountering the gaps between heaven and earth: lament. It draws us closer to our neighbors and to our God.

How did we learn & practice lament in the last year?
(not exhaustive)

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Service of Lament

**That They All May Be One
Sermon Series**

Holy History Sharing

Self-Guided Tour of Lament

**Book Recommendation/Club
(Practicing Lament
by Rebekah Eklund)**

Gary Burge Seminar

Lamentations Sermon Series

**Christ the King Sermon Series
(Gospel of Luke)**

**Emotions: Friend or Foe
Pine Rest Seminar**

**Return to Lament
Sermon Series**

**Creating a broken and
beautiful artistic expression in
worship (coming May 7)**

My natural bent is to see the best in life and focus on the good. And while there are good things in life, and much to be thankful for, there is also much pain. I have learned a lot this year about leaning into lament. I have found that lament to me, has meant being more authentic. ~ Angel Baum

Visionary Plan: Year In Review

Over a year ago we started an intentional process of discerning where God is leading Thornapple. Our Visionary Plan includes both where God is calling us and how we will get there and is more than just a vision statement. It is a dynamic, living document that depends on God's continued guidance as we start on the journey.

We called this journey "from broken to beautiful." **Over the next five years, it is God's dream that Thornapple will be a refreshing oasis for our community, authentically and wholly centered on Jesus in order to show our neighbors that God is for them and provides healing for the hurt, division and grief in our world.**

The first year of this journey focused on facing the brokenness in our world and within ourselves. It is tempting to turn away. It is easier to look at the beautiful parts, to value them more than the less appealing ones. But God was inviting us to look closer at all of reality. To realize that beautiful and broken are not mutually exclusive.

We found the practice of lament is the Christian response to the gaps between heaven and earth.

It names the fact that things are not as they should be nor as they will be when Christ returns and restores all things. While we wait for things to be "on earth as in heaven," we can lament.

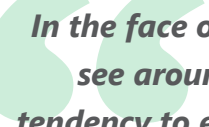
Lament is telling God everything we know when things have gone wrong because of what God has promised. **Lament is built on a trusting relationship between the human and the divine** - God can handle what we bring before Him, He invites us to bring our whole selves before Him without fear of rejection. It lets us more fully name our reality that things are not as they are supposed to be. Like the Psalmist, we are free to bring everything into our prayers with God.

Just the word "lament" created problems for us. It brought images of sackcloth and ashes! Such a downer. Who wants to be part of a church like that? **We did not describe lament well enough within the larger visionary journey God is taking us on.** Leadership also over-emphasized Thornapple's history as the door into lament. This turned out to be too narrow and worked against us when in reality, everyone has something to lament, especially after the various losses created by a global pandemic.

Thornapple persevered and learned how/when/what to lament over the past year. It came in fits and spurts. There was no one big thing that made it click. **Lament came to people through small practices like worship and reading.** It is remarkably beautiful that lament was more caught than taught.

In the middle of the year, the name of the journey changed. **Our original phrase "from broken to beautiful" became "broken and beautiful."** Indicating our ultimate destination is a both/and, not either/or. We are so loved as God's broken and beautiful children. We recognize that until Christ returns and renews the earth, we will remain broken.

Initially it was easier to see lament things "out there" like Israel's story in the book of Lamentations or prayers naming the war in Ukraine. **Over time, our lament came to include the brokenness "in here" and how we live with the effects of sin every day.**



In the face of such hard things that I see around me, I have had the tendency to either turn toward apathy – why bother even thinking or caring about these things when there's nothing I can do about them – or anxiety – letting my thoughts and concerns ruminate until that's all I can think about. What I have learned throughout this past year is that perhaps is a third option: lament.
~ Sarah DeBaets