# The Case for Crying in Public

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Preacher: Toochi Ngwangwa

[0:00] My name is Tobi Chihuahua and I've been a member of the preaching team for about three years now. I know because it was long time I thought it was going to start it. Last year I primarily attended Table Church virtually. So this sermon goes out to those virtual people out there as well as it's been here today. And the main reason was because there really was a lot going on in D.C. in 2025.

Between the RIFs, attacks on my neighbors, both immigrants and the house individuals in D.C., the cuts on education, elimination of D.I.R., and later ICE reports. I really just needed a break from the district.
So me and my family drove up to New York on consecutive weekends to stay with my parents and we really spent most of the first half of D.C. taking those trips.
We took our first international family trip that summer to Asia and we celebrated my niece's birthday, which just so happens to be the day after July 4th.
And finally felt that I had gotten that space, come back and re-root myself back in D.C. So we spent the first, August was the first full month back in D.C. And I vividly remember, August 10th, we had Table Church had the show name of sinners. And on the way back home, I saw the first deployment of Federal Forces in the district.
[1:29] Jari. Jari. I give this context in my introduction to let you know that I am actively exploring ways to grief. And this very well may be some of the experiences you may have had, whether it's last year or this year.

And it's been heavy. And I just want to take some time to acknowledge that, to name that. Today Tonnetta has asked me to speak on grief because many of us in this space to acknowledge what it is we are experiencing on a personal level and within our community.
It is equally important to walk through how to authentically navigate this season and how scripture guides us on that process. So today's sermon will delve deeper into the book of Jeremiah with what is commonly known as the Weeping Colus.
As we continue to answer the question, how do we turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh? And we explore grieving as a way to get us to that state through vulnerability and ultimately through restoration.
So Jeremiah is sometimes considered the Weeping Prophet because he warns the people of Judah of the devastation that will come from Babylonian conquest. This conquest eventually ends in exile.
[2:54] Jeremiah's prophecy is not popular. In fact, early in the passage that we'll read today, in Jeremiah 8.11, Jeremiah notes alternative and somehow more digestible prophecies that were being shared at that time.

They would offer healing offhand. And the 8.11 says, They offer healing for the wounds of my poor people, saying, All is well, all is well, when nothing is actually well.
Jeremiah does not give these false prophecies or placate the king of Judah with hopes of sustained help from outside at the time when he believed Egypt would rescue the people of Judah from the Babylonians.
But as noted later on in Jeremiah 37.6-7. Instead, Jeremiah communicated a very harsh truth of destruction and devastation.
And he prophesied a judgment on the people of Judah. Yet as he gives this harsh message, he also grieves. And he grieves loudly. So if you guys have your Bible, you can turn to Jeremiah 8.18.
[4:08] I'll read up to 9.1. My grief is beyond healing. My heart is broken. Listen to the weeping of my people.

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It can be heard all across the land. Has the Lord abandoned Jerusalem? Is her king no longer there? The harvest is finished and the summer is gone.
The people cry. Yet we are not saved. I hurt with the hurt of my people. I mourn and am overcome with grief. Is there no physician here?
Why is there no healing for the wounds of my people? If only my head were a pool of water and my eyes a fountain of tears, I would weep day and night for all my people who have been slaughtered.
This poetic dialogue is characterized as the weeping poem. Some scholars interpret the main voice in the poem to be gods, portraying God's own weeping.
[5:17] A God that wants to mourn for a love lost and that is now separated, as soon the people of Judah will be separated from their home. Other scholars understand this to be Jeremiah's voice, still speaking on behalf of God.

In this context, Jeremiah doesn't only weep for his people, he also weeps for God. As Kathleen O'Connor notes in this poem, Jeremiah echoes God's inner being.
By saying, if only my head were a pool of water and my eyes a fountain of tears, I would weep. This translation expresses a wish to weep, not a naturality.
Not a should've, would've, or could've pitch to tears and mourning, but if only I could. Would that there were. Who else would make these tears form?
Better yet, who can let it? So as the people cry across the land, they question God's presence in the grief. Yet as Jeremiah states, I hurt with the hurt of my people.
[6:19] I mourn and am overcome with grief. In these words, we do hear God's grief. And we hear the echoes of it. It is a pain so deep that tears won't come, not just yet.

So that the pen has to cry for the people. And this is the tension that we explore today, using grief to soften our hearts so it can be healed, revived, and ultimately neglected.
I'm reminded about multiple expressions of grief. In one quote that Lupita Nyong'o shared, she quoted an unknown author in response to the death of Chadwick Boseman in 2024.
The quote states, grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor is it a lack of faith.
It is the price of love. In that movie, Black Panther, Boseman played T'Challa, who was a superhero protecting his country, Wakanda, from colonization.
[7:24] A similar reality the people of Judah were facing. Yet in real life, T'Challa grieved privately as he fought a personal battle with colon cancer, which ultimately led to his death.

I think about the personal side of grief that some of us often used to keep private. Whether grieving with a trusted few, close friends and family, I think about the dignity and perceived safety that might come with that process.
I think that may have been what I was trying to do those times I spent the long weekends driving to New York last year. Going back to a Christian home, as the current one, didn't quite seem recognizable and in some ways redeemable.
I was trying to make sense of a suffering that I didn't feel I had the power to change, trying to find glimpses of comfort while also tangible moments of hope.
And while I can only imagine how Chadwin Boseman may have felt, I think about the contrast. Mr. Boseman played a superhero on TV that was nearly invincible, yet still privately battled with mortality.
[8:40] This psychotomy gives me a better understanding of the meaning of lamentation, a public display of grief that invites the community to grieve as a whole.

In Jeremiah, this looks like crying for my people, with my people, or the mourning woman who mourned at the funerals, which he later commands to grieve in Jeremiah 9.18.
Jeremiah 9.18 says, Quick, begin your weeping. Let the tears fall from your eyes. Jeremiah 9.20 goes on to say, Listen, woman, to the words of the Lord.
Teach your daughters to wail. Teach one another to lament. We see public displays of lamentation in many cultures, taking multiple forms.
In the Jewish tradition, there's the Shiva, which in those seven days of grieving, the community can come to comfort mourners, offer food, and pray daily.
[9:40] In Japan's Albin Festival, similar to the Mexican festival of Dia de los Morte, family members are commemorated, and ancestors are remembered.

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Graves are cleaned, offerings are made to show respect. Dances and performances are done in remembrance. These activities foster a sense of continuity between past and present.
New Orleans jazz funerals are similar to many African traditions, such as Nigerian or Ghanaian homecoming, that celebrate the deceased's life, and honor their legacy through music, dancing, and storytelling, and celebrates death as a natural extension of that celebration.
This collective mourning practice helps to support the bereaved and provide strength and solidarity during difficult times. In New Zealand, the Mori Tangi also leans into celebratory practices, with an emphasis on storytelling, as a way to preserve a loved one's memory, and keep legacy alive.
These practices show the universality of how grief can be expressed. As much as it is individual experience, it's also a communal call. As personal grief is, lamentations remind us that it doesn't have to be private, but can be done in community, even in public display.
[11:08] As Lupita quoted, love is central to grief. Then, the underlying invitation to grieve and mourn is a remembrance of who we hope to become through that grief, as well as who we hope to be with.

Questions such as, is the king no longer here, become irrelevant as we experience God, community, and even our lost ones in remembrance of them through the process of grief. It is this unity that we remember the good news.
Through grief, we understand the extent of love, particularly God's love, and how the limitless of that love lives inside of us. A perfect example, Jesus' crucifixion.
What a public display of grief. We see it characterized by the women of Jerusalem wailing, mourning, beating their breasts, as Jesus' carry across that is too heavy, across for us.
This communal lament is what we commemorate on Good Friday and throughout Lent. Whether we fast, reflect, or express a form of sacrifice or service, Lent is an open invitation, a communal one at that, to mourn and grieve with Jesus as he boldly and vulnerably walks towards death.
[12:29] It is one example of solemn expression of grief, neither neat nor sanitized, but transformational. This vulnerability is the first step of Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant.

In Jeremiah 31-34, he states a new covenant where God will write his laws on our hearts. These laws no longer need stone.
In order for us to receive this new covenant, we no longer have to offer hearts of stone. God has no more use of that. We must offer hearts of flesh, as vulnerable and uncomfortable as that may be.
And just as this season of Lent shows us, we can lean on Jesus and mourn in grief. Having faith that in his promise, we still will be comforted.

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