

Remembrance/不堪回首的記憶

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You've heard Sue read Lamentations 3:19-26, the Old Testament reading in Taiwanese. I would like us to be reminded that people are lamenting in the world.

This morning I needed these words like our text Lamentations 3:19-26.

Maybe some of you noticed that our homeland made to headline this week. A towering arch bridge over a bay (南方澳) in eastern Taiwan collapsed. A small but crowded fishermen village, leaving many people serious injured in hospital and searching missing fishermen. It was hours after a typhoon swept, also earthquake hit frequently.

Our neighbor Hong Kong also made headline. It is even more devastating. After months of protest chaos. We are fearful for people's life in Hong Kong. We see police brutality and we hope they release of arrested demonstrators. Last week, there were 24 cities and 40 countries, Thousands across Asia Pacific march to in solidarity with Hong Kong including our homeland Taiwan. A police officer shot a 16 years old protester in the chest as Beijing celebrated the 70th anniversary of Communist Party rule in China. People are dying, people are suffering.

Same as Livingston church, Taiwanese church also went on Puerto Rico mission trip. we visited Levittown, the very center hitting by Hurricane Maria. We listen to heart ranching stories as they share their horrific memory as they relive the moment of terror and powerless. It still vivid and raw. Two years After Hurricane Maria hit, It is very hard for them to talk. We knew that people lost building, material, but the depth of displace and lose belonging. little school kids still in grief and in crisis. The level of clergies, teachers and social worker are burning out... suicidal People are lamenting

over the death of loved ones and fear every time it rain or hurricane occurred ◦ People are dying, people are suffering.

I needed these words like our text this morning, The words guard my heart as I listening the voice from the suffering. How people make sense out of it.

Lamentation 3: 19-20

¹⁹The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!

²⁰My soul continually thinks of it
and is bowed down within me.

There is no lack of lament to go around. But I don't want to focus so much on the lament today. The question isn't how well we do for lament But How we do on hope? Are we failing in hope?

Biblical lament is hopeful speech, speak to a God whom we believe can save or deliver. Biblical lament is full of faith in God. The heart of biblical lament is hope as most lament psalms. It is from plea to praise or to hope.

²¹ this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

The text gave us a key to keep hope. "*this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.*"

How we remember is linked to how we hope or not. The text told us that if we don't the memory of our past maybe we won't

have hope in the present, because hope is restored through remembrance.

Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Lecture titled, “hope, despair, and memory”, he says, “without memory, our existence would be barren and opaque... it is memory that will save humanity.” Wiesel refuses to forget the horrors of the Holocaust. For Wiesel, forgetting is not an option as he recalls how throughout the Bible Israel is called to remember over and over again.

The poet calls to mind which bring hope is God and God’s steadfast love.

¹ this I call to mind, ...

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

I love this parallel line in that same verse, “*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end*”.

What I call to mind is “Steadfast love”, steadfast love is the mercies of God. “Steadfast love” of the Lord will never be cut off, and “mercies” (Chesed) never come to an end. A word for “mercy” (chesed) based on the Hebrew word for “womb.” Thus the mercy of God is likened to a woman’s womb, imaging God’s love to be like that tender, intimate love shared by a woman for her child, When we call to mind that unbreakable love, we can find hope because it is “new every morning.” God’s love never grows old, never wears out, never gets tired,

day after day, night after night, hangover after hangover. Love is still there. “great is your faithfulness”.

If we don’t remember this, we won’t remember hope.

Throughout of scripture, the people of God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. Remembrance is a hopeful act that functions as a counter-memory to exilic memories of depression and trauma. Isn’t ironic to stop relive the horrified past, to counter-memory, by remember and bringing to mind the “memories of God” such as Israel’s exodus and Christ’s Death and resurrection, recall God’s promise as the reality of our own future.

²⁴ “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”

²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.

²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.

We may think hope depends on us, but hope depends on God, God’s faithful love that will never let us go, unlike other things or other people. Through living word of God, we inherit and memory of God’s people, we are part of his covenant. The memory of God is that we are remembered in love. Our memories of hope are rooted in remembering that God’s love for us endures and we are never forgotten even if we forget.

What is beautiful and necessary is that this divine memory is communal. It is not your memory or my memory but our

memory. The grief of the people of Israel over the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its people in Babylon. The grief of the people in natural disaster or evil political power or combination of it. The poet or brothers and sisters survived of their trauma and they survived to encourage us to remember. Those who endured this horror are helping us to never forget because we can't remember on our own. We have to support and help each other sustain our memory in order to maintain our hope for the future.

We need the entire community of faith and communal memory of God's mighty deeds throughout history and four ends of world. We need each other, the worldwide communion of believers, the protestors in Hong Kong and the survivals in Taiwan and Puerto Rico. We are here to be reminded of God's present movement in the world and our lives, especially when our memory begins to fail. If we don't lean on each other to remember, we'll forget and as a result, lose hope. But if we remember, hope will be born.

We exercise our memory and call to mind the steadfast love of God when we eat and drink. This is the meaning of world communion Sunday is. We are here for this reason. May God bless whom has hear to hear.