In this season of uncertainty while we transition to distance learning, worshipping online, and waiting to hear about events we have been long looking forward to, we are grieving the loss of time together in person, expectations that won’t be met, and dreams that are now up in the air. With loss, comes grief.

Grief looks different for everyone--it can be quick or last a while, make you withdraw from others or seek them out, cause feelings of sadness or anger, even affect your energy and motivation. However you experience grief in this season, it’s normal! Grief is part of being human and it can feel overwhelming, but we can look to the examples of the past, including scripture to guide us through, and we can rally in community together to share in our sorrows and find joy and hope for the future.

The people of Jerusalem know deeply about grief. After the first Babylonian siege 10 years earlier, Jerusalem was destroyed in 587-586 BCE, and its people were exiled into Babylon. The book of Lamentations is a collection of poems and songs lamenting, mourning, and expressing the grief of the loss of their city and freedoms. The book is generally attributed to being written by the prophet Jeremiah, and in the text today we hear how deeply he has felt the pain of the uncertainty and grief in their situation.

**Read Lamentations 3:17-24:**

17 my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is;

18 so I say, ‘Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord.’

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

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

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

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.

24 ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’

**Reflect / Discuss:**

1. Was Jeremiah right to feel the way he did? How would you have felt in that scenario?
2. Has there been a time in your life where God felt far away? What was happening?
3. Has there been a time in your life where you felt very close to God? What was happening?
4. What makes getting/staying close to God so difficult?
5. Re-read Lamentations 3:21-24 - how do you think Jeremiah was able to turn his thinking around so quickly?

**Pray:**

Take this time to connect with God, either sharing your loss and grief and listening for God’s love and care, or even with ‘sighs too deep for words’ as Romans 8:26 (NRSV) says, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”