

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "The Fruit of the Spirit: FAITHFULNESS"

Scripture: Lamentations 1:1-6, 3:19-33

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October 25, 2026

Opening Hymn: O God, our help in ages past #330

Choruses: 10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord) He will hold me fast

Hymn after sermon: I have decided to follow Jesus #570

Closing Hymn: Great Is Thy Faithfulness #324

Do you have a reliable person

you can call on when your car won't start?

Maybe it's a neighbour who knows a thing or two about engines.

You mention the problem, and before long,

they're ringing your doorbell

with a toolkit in hand.

But let me ask you a more important question.

Who can you count on when life falls apart?

When you lose your job.

When illness or injury leaves you needing help with the simplest things.

When grief overwhelms you,

or anxiety makes it difficult to get out of bed.

Many people will rally around us when a crisis first strikes.

But what happens when the crisis continues?

When recovery takes months, or even years?

When we still need help long

after everyone else has returned to normal life?

Who will keep showing up?

The writer of Proverbs asks a similar question:

"Many claim to have unfailing love,

but a faithful person who can find?" [Proverbs 20:6]

The Book of Lamentations takes us

into one of the darkest moments in Israel's history.

Jerusalem has been destroyed.

The temple has been burned.

Many people have died,

and others have been carried away into exile.

The opening chapter describes Jerusalem as a widow,
abandoned and alone.

The city that was once full of life now sits in ruins.

Its people weep, their friends have turned away,

and there is no one to offer comfort:

"How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!

How like a widow is she,

who once was great among the nations!

She who was queen among the provinces

has now become a slave.

Bitterly she weeps at night,

tears are on her cheeks.

Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her.

All her friends have betrayed her;

they have become her enemies.

After affliction and harsh labor,

Judah has gone into exile." [Lamentations 1:1-3]

This is not simply a description of a city in trouble.

It is a cry of grief from a people

who have lost almost everything.

[see Christopher J. H. Wright Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit 115]

The writer does not try to hide this pain or explain it away.

Instead, he gives God's people words to express their anguish,

their confusion, and voice their protest before God.

[see BibleProject's description of lament in:]

But then, in the middle of all this sorrow,

something changes.

The writer says:

“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”

Notice what he doesn't say.

He doesn't say that his suffering has ended.

He doesn't say that everything suddenly makes sense.

He doesn't pretend that the destruction of Jerusalem wasn't real.

His circumstances haven't changed,
but he remembers something about God.

What does he remember?

We need to fill in the blanks,

But we can be quite certain that

He remembers how God delivered his people from Egypt,
provided for them in the wilderness,
and brought them into the promised land.

He remembers a God who has heard the cries of his people before.

And so he dares to hope that God will hear them again.

[see Carol J. Dempsey, “Pastoral Perspective (Lamentations 3:22–33),” in *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Additional Essays*, vol. 31, Feasting on the Word (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 9.]

The writer remembers God's great love.

He remembers that God's compassion does not fail.

And he trusts that the God who has been faithful in the past
will not abandon his people now.

“...For his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.” [Lamentations 3:22-23]

This is not easy optimism.

It is hope rooted in the character of God.

This doesn't lead the writer to expect immediate relief,

But it calls him to hope and patience:

“I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him.’

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,

to the one who seeks him;

it is good to wait quietly

for the salvation of the Lord.” [Lamentations 3:24-26]

Keep in mind that the writer understands Jerusalem's destruction
in the context of the people's persistent unfaithfulness to God.

But he does not conclude that God delights in their suffering.

Instead, even in the midst of judgment,

he remembers God's compassion.

He remembers that God is not indifferent to human suffering,
nor does he take pleasure in grief:

“Though he brings grief, he will show compassion,
so great is his unfailing love.

For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone”. [Lamentations 3:32-33]

God's justice is real, but so is his steadfast love.

The writer cannot yet see how restoration will unfold

But he trusts that God's heart remains tender

And so the writer continues to hope in God's compassion
and the possibility of restoration.

PAUSE

The faithfulness we see in Lamentations

becomes even clearer when we look at Jesus.

God did not abandon a world

that had turned away from him.

In love, he sent his Son.

Jesus lived in perfect faithfulness to the Father,

gave himself for us on the cross,

and rose again so that our sin might be forgiven

and our relationship with God restored.

When we were unfaithful,

God did not abandon his plans to redeem us.

We have not done anything to deserve his favour or care.

As Paul reminds us in Ephesians:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
not by works, so that no one can boast. [Ephesians 2:8-9].

Through Jesus, we are forgiven
and brought back into relationship with God.
And this renewed relationship does not leave us unchanged.
Through the Holy Spirit, God begins to grow
his own faithful character in us.

We begin to become more like Jesus:
people who are trustworthy, dependable, and faithful over the long haul.
People whom our friends, our families, and our neighbours can count on.
[for definition of faithfulness see Christopher J. H. Wright Cultivating the Fruit
of the Spirit 113]

PAUSE

Today, as some among us profess their faith
and others are baptized,
we are reminded of the promises at the heart of the Christian life.
We promise to turn away from sin,
to follow Jesus, to grow in faith,
and to encourage others in their walk with him.

These are serious promises.
They call for faithfulness:
a steady, lifelong commitment to following Jesus.
Of course, none of us will live these promises perfectly.
There will be times when our faith falters,
when we grow tired,
and when we fail to keep our commitments as we should.

But the good news is that we do not make these promises in our own strength.
We make them trusting in the faithfulness of God.
The same God who has reconciled us in Jesus

will continue to meet us with grace,
forgive us when we fail,
and work in us through the Holy Spirit.

Faithfulness is not about never stumbling.
It is about learning, by God's grace,
to keep walking with him over the long haul.
Faithfulness is what author Eugene Peterson called
"a long obedience in the same direction."
[as quoted in Christopher J. H. Wright Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit 124]

Which brings us back to the question
That I asked at the beginning of this sermon?
So, who can you count on when the bottom falls out of your life?
The good news of Lamentations is that even in our darkest moments,
we can turn to the God whose compassion never fails.

And as God grows his faithfulness in us,
we can become people who keep showing up for one another.
People who stay when the struggle continues,
who offer support when there are no easy answers,
and who keep loving when love becomes costly.

Because God is faithful,
we can trust him in the darkness.
We can begin again when we fail.
And through the Holy Spirit,
we can grow into people who are faithful to God
and dependable for one another.

We may not always get it right.
We may grow weary, stumble, or lose our way.
But God's mercies are new every morning.
Great is his faithfulness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.