

2026. 0712. Psalm 27. Disconnected

We learned that the Psalms can be categorized into three patterns according to Walter Brueggemann's theory: psalms of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation. We also learned how this structure reflects our faith journeys and our lives as movements of connectedness, disconnectedness, and re-connectedness. Today is the second time we are reflecting on what causes us to become disconnected from God and from one another, and we will continue to learn about this through the Psalms.

When we read the Psalms, we find that the Psalms of "disorientation" are full of extravagant lament and harsh language. We don't often read these lament Psalms in worship, because we have historically believed that faith does not involve acknowledging and embracing negativity. We thought that acknowledging negativity was an act of unbelief.

Yet, the reality is that life on this earth is often under threat. Illness, death, poverty, and violence are very real dangers—and for many, they are occurring even now. There are people who seem to be doing fine on the outside, but in reality, they are drowning in a sea of depression, loneliness, or despair.

Our lives inevitably go through these seasons of confusion, anguish, hurt, and alienation. We see it in the loss of a friend's child to a drug overdose, the unexpected pain that follows surgery, the devastation of a nation after a hurricane, and the disorienting anxiety that comes with major life changes. These experiences inevitably stir up raw feelings of sorrow, fear, rage, self-pity, and resentment. We have all been through these kinds of emotional rollercoasters at different points in our lives.

However, the lament psalms help us express the sorrow, suffering, anxiety, and pain we endure from time to time. They honestly voice rage, sorrow, and a desire for retribution, yet ultimately hand them over to God rather than act on them, freeing us to forgive and live.

If we are going to live authentically, there are times when we absolutely need to name our sorrows, our fears, and the events that have wounded or disabled us. We also need safe places to do this, along with compassionate, receptive ears to hear our complaints. Healing begins with naming what hurts.

The lament psalms help us do this in our prayer. The Psalms give us words to pray when life falls apart.

The focus then turns to the psalms of confession, showing how telling the truth about sin, despite its consequences, leads to forgiveness, release from crushing guilt, and new life in God's grace.

To illustrate this, there is a beautiful children's book titled *Witch's Knot*, written by Lisa Biggi.

I'm not sure whether you remember that I tend to read children's books when I have many things on my mind. This one is a children's book, but unfortunately, it's written in Italian and hasn't been translated into English yet, so I read it in Korean. I wish I could speak Italian.

The story follows a very familiar pattern.

In a small, quiet house in the forest, a witch with special powers lives alone. The witch was incredibly skilled at smelling the 'scent of happiness.' If the forest animals were even a little happy, the witch would seize the moment and rush to snatch the happiness whole. And to prevent that happiness from escaping, she tied a tight, snug knot inside her long hair and locked it away. Because of the witch's

tyranny, the animals were always terrified and fled, suffering from the loss of all happiness in the forest.

The more she takes away others' happiness and imprisons herself, the deeper the shadow and depression grow in the witch's heart, she lives in isolation, tightly shutting the door to her heart.

The forest animals hold a meeting and devise a plan to eliminate the witch. They plan to provoke by forceful means, such as filling the witch's well with gravel, damaging the garden, and setting traps. However, they realized that violent responses repeatedly failed to offer a solution. At this moment, the thoughtful badger, who had been silent and quiet, makes a new proposal. Instead of pushing or attacking the witch, they decided to offer her a 'hospitality' that embraced her. They invited her to a forest party, and the witch hesitated at first, but she finally decided to go to the party. To attend parties, the witch unties the hair she has tied tightly for her entire life, one by one and washes her hair cleanly.

The witch who appeared at the party was no longer as intimidating as before. Perhaps because she had untied her hair and opened her heart, she appeared as a small old woman shyly hiding behind a tree. At that moment, the badger kindly approached, reached out her hand, and said, "Would you like to dance?"

The witch tastes the cake handed out by the animals, holds hands, and dances with them, feeling, for the first time in her life, an unfading true happiness. She realizes that happiness is not something she holds and keeps alone, but is only complete when she connects with others and shares.

This story made me reflect on the tight, stubborn knots tucked away inside my own heart.

What knots are tied in our hearts today?

Considering our theme, what are the specific knots that cause us to become disconnected from one another and from God?

When thoughts of hatred and resentment enter our minds, they can feel terrifyingly powerful and destructive. Yet, the Psalms give us a safe pathway to release these desires. As we voice them honestly in prayer, we discover they lose their suffocating grip over us. Through these psalms of lament, we learn a radical truth: they never call for us to take vengeance into our own hands. Instead, they invite us to hand those desires over to God, trusting completely in God's ultimate righteousness.

As Walter Brueggemann notes, acknowledging God's sole right and ability to complete justice is exactly what releases us from the power of our own wrath. However, this does not mean there is nothing we can do; rather, what we do must flow from God's righteousness, not from our own desires. God bears our vengeance for us—and the crucifixion of Christ stands as the most staggering act of God bearing God's own righteous anger for our sakes.

So, let us be honest about these heavy things by entrusting them to God in prayer, knowing that in the fullness of time, all things will be set right. When you surrender those burdens, you will find yourself fundamentally freed—freed from the hatred that binds you, and free to sing the Lord's song once again.

Where are you being consumed by hatred today?

Where have you been deeply hurt or harmed by injustice?

Or, conversely, where have you hurt others because of selfishness, narrow-mindedness, or judgment?

To fully pray the Psalms, we must be willing to locate all of these seasons in our lives. We must bring our moments of confidence, resilience, and fruitful living, but

we must also bring our brokenness. As we enter into this collective prayer and song of our common humanity, let us be attentive to its simplicity, its deep passion, and the bold, unvarnished ways in which the human voice turns to the Holy One. Let us embrace one another in our losses, offering each other whatever comfort we can.

Thanks be to God. Amen.