

# **St. Mary's Sermons**

**Date of Sermon: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

**Psalm 137**

**New Living Translation (NLT)**

## Psalm 137

<sup>1</sup> *Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept  
as we thought of Jerusalem.*

<sup>2</sup> *We put away our harps,  
hanging them on the branches of poplar trees.*

<sup>3</sup> *For our captors demanded a song from us.  
Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn:  
“Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!”*

<sup>4</sup> *But how can we sing the songs of the LORD  
while in a pagan land?*

<sup>5</sup> *If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
let my right hand forget how to play the harp.*

<sup>6</sup> *May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth  
if I fail to remember you,  
if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy.*

<sup>7</sup> *O LORD, remember what the Edomites did  
on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem.*

*“Destroy it!” they yelled.*

*“Level it to the ground!”*

<sup>8</sup> *O Babylon, you will be destroyed.  
Happy is the one who pays you back  
for what you have done to us.*

Despite being God's chosen people, the Jews spent long periods of time in the wilderness, or in exile in Babylon. Many of the psalms are cries of lament, in which the psalmist powerfully expresses their anger towards God, for the situation that they find themselves in and even vocalise the question why God has abandoned them.

Down the years many people have found these psalms have helped them to vocalise their own predicament to God. The song, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, which became one of the bestselling singles of all time in the UK, was originally as Rastafarian song that provided singers in the Caribbean the opportunity to express their own protest and lament about colonialism as well as their longing for freedom.

Many of us today have forgotten the benefits of lament and we can find these psalms to be rather disturbing and even offensive, especially when they cry out to God for revenge and ask him to totally obliterate their enemies. If there is one thing that we can learn from the psalms it is that we should not be afraid to express our true

feelings towards God, even when we are worried, bitter, resentful, or even when we cannot sense his presence with us at all.

In the current pandemic, when we find it difficult to find the right words to pray, we should not be afraid to simply cry out to God for deliverance and mercy. It is ok to let him know exactly how we feel.

Often, having expressed their feelings towards God, the psalmists end with a real sense of renewed hope and faith that God has heard their prayers, that he will answer them and that, ultimately, he will deliver them from hands of their enemies.

The cross: we shall take it.  
The bread: we shall break it.  
The pain: we shall bear it.  
The Joy we shall share it.  
The gospel we shall live it.  
The Love: we shall give.  
The light: we shall cherish it.  
The darkness: God shall perish it Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs for this week's prayer times

Tuesday	Psalm 51 Kendrick's
Wednesday	Amazing grace
Thursday	Meekness & Majesty
Friday	Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice When I survey
Saturday	From Heaven you came
Sunday	Thine be the glory He has risen
Monday	O praise the name of the Lord my God (Anástasis)