Lamenting Pain: Turning to God

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] It's good to be with you, to worship with you. We look forward to this every Sunday. And we are in a new series in the Lament Psalms for the next few weeks.

So if you have a Bible, please turn to Psalm 77. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to bring a copy over to you that you can have, you can use.
Psalms are pretty much right in the middle of the book. If you're not familiar with your Bibles, just open it up. Right around to the middle and it should be there in Psalm 77. You might be wondering why we're doing this series.
There are many kinds of Psalms. There's 150 of them. There's different kinds like Royal Psalms and Wisdom Psalms and Thanksgiving Songs and Psalms. And you might wonder, why are we focusing on the Lament Psalms?
Because I think someone asked me that question. One of you guys, I forget who it was. And the Lament Psalms, surprisingly, constitute the largest section of the Psalter.
[1:11] There are more Lament Psalms in the Psalms than any other kind of Psalms. And they're there for a reason. They help us in the midst of our suffering and struggles to turn to God rather than to turn away from Him, withdraw from Him.

And over the years in our church, we have had people suffer many things. We have had a woman who grieved the loss of her mother. Another woman who was grieving the loss of her father.
We have had people, couples, who are just mourning the fact that they couldn't have kids, infertility, or suffered miscarriages.
We have had a mom who was mourning just the choices, life choices of a wayward son. We have had couples just dealing with the pain of a rapidly disintegrating marriage.
We've had people who have felt rejected and perhaps even disowned by their parents. And all of these are really difficult things to go through in life.
[2:18] And when you're facing suffering, I think what helps you to deal with it well is whether you know how to turn to God in the midst of it and cry out to God in the midst of that pain or whether you kind of shell up, hold up, and withdraw from that.

And the Lament Psalms are supposed to help us to do that. I think one reason why we have a hard time with the idea of lament as Christians is because we have been taught, and rightly so, but in many places that we should be rejoicing.
And we are taught that we should rejoice in our suffering. And that's biblical. It says in Romans 5, 3, Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.
And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. So we are supposed to rejoice even in our suffering. So doesn't that mean we shouldn't lament?
We shouldn't cry out to God about our pain and suffering? Well, the answer is yes and no, because we are supposed to cry out to God. In 2 Corinthians 6, 10, after describing all the travails that he and his ministry partners have gone through, Paul tells the Corinthian church that he was sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.
[3:41] So those two things are not mutually exclusive. We are sorrowful on the one hand because we experience real pain, because we live in a broken and sinful world, and we are hurting inside, and so we are sorrowful.

And yet, because we believe in the sovereign God, who does work things, all things, for his glory and good, we can rejoice, we can have hope.

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We often talk about the fact that Jesus brought the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has been inaugurated. It's begun already. It's coming. And yet, it's not fully here yet.
It's already, but not yet. And lament psalms help us to bridge that gap between the already and the not yet, where you have the pain of the present, but the promises of God for the future.
And lament helps us to bridge that gap. I want to recommend to you, before we get started with this new series, a book by Mark Rogop called, you know, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy.
[4:47] If you're in the middle of going through some difficult times in your life, that's a book that I highly recommend to you, and I'll be pulling some quotes from there as well as we go through this sermon. Let me pray now for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Father, you alone know everything that these dear brothers and sisters and visitors are feeling and going through. And you do see.
You see their pain and you see their tears. As we open up your word in Psalm 77 this morning, please draw near to us.
Comfort your precious saints with the truths of your word. Lift up their gaze from themselves and from their pain unto you, Lord God.
And fill them with hope, with faith, with love. In Jesus' name we pray.
[6:01] Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand for the reading of God's word. Psalm 77.
Psalm 77. To the choir master, according to Jeduthin, a psalm of Asaph.

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying.
My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah. You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago.
I said, let me remember my song in the night. Let me meditate in my heart. Then my spirit made a diligent search. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?
[7:20] Has His steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in anger shut up His compassion? Selah. Then I said, I will appeal to this.
To the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God?
You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples. You, with your arm, redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.
[8:20] Selah. When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep trembled.

The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder. Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind.
Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters. Yet your footprints were unseen.
You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. The main point of this psalm, as I think I have to display here for you, is that in the times of trouble, in the day of trouble, we should remember God.
And we should turn to him and remember the redemption of the days of old. And I have two main points I want to emphasize. One is to seek the Lord in the day of trouble. And then secondly, to remember the Lord in the days of old.
[9:30] This psalm, like many psalms in the Psalter, begins with the subtitle. Those are just the small print words at the top of the psalm. It says, To the choir master, according to Jeduthun, a psalm of Asaph.

People debate the meaning of this subtitle, and it's difficult to be certain. But here are a few things that we do know. Jeduthun was a Levite, and one of the three masters of music appointed by David in 1 Chronicles 16.
His specific God-given task was to lead in giving thanks to the Lord with music. 1 Chronicles 16.42 tells us that Jeduthun had trumpets and cymbals for the music and instruments for sacred song.

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So the phrase, a psalm of, and then the phrase, a psalm of Asaph, most likely means that this was a psalm written by Asaph. Psalm 50 and Psalm 73 to 80, inclusively, are all attributed to Asaph in this manner.
The most frequent attribution in the Psalter is a psalm of David, and we know for a fact that David wrote a number of psalms. He's described as the sweet psalmist of Israel in 2 Samuel 23.1.
[10:37] And so, likely, if that means psalms written by David, a psalm of Asaph probably means a psalm written by Asaph. We do have confirmation in 2 Chronicles 29.30 that Asaph did write some psalms, since it says that Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer.

So Asaph had a prophetic gift, and he had a musical gift, and he composed songs. He was also a Levite and was appointed by King David in 1 Chronicles 6.39 to serve as one of the choir leaders. So a possible interpretation of the subtitle is that this is a technical musical note intended for the choir master, who is to play this psalm written by Asaph according to the arrangement or tune by Jeduthin.
So it's fascinating. It's a fascinating kind of detail, insight into the history of Israel and their corporate worship, but it also reveals God's will for us because He wants us to sing to Him.
As the psalm of lament teaches us, He wants us to sing even in the midst of our pain, even in the midst of our suffering, even if that means singing through tears. The longest book of the Bible is the psalms, and the psalms is literally a collection of psalms.
[12:02] God put music, complete with musical notations, into the written Word of God because that's how important it is for in the life of God's people to sing, to sing to God.

So I want to thank our music ministry team who did an excellent job leading us today. Thanks Wes for leading that team. And as we start to move to the main body of the psalm, the first thing that pops out immediately is the frequent use of the first person singular pronoun, I.
Look through, scan the psalm, and you'll see, I cry aloud to God. I seek the Lord. I remember God. I moan. I meditate. I am so troubled. There are, of course, times of corporate or communal lament, mourning.
But this psalm, even though it was used in corporate worship, is a deeply personal psalm. It invites you and me to bring your own trouble and my own trouble to God personally in lament.
Pain and suffering can have an isolating effect. When you're experiencing deep sorrow and grief, and some of you guys I know have experienced this, normal social interactions are very difficult.
[13:22] Hey, how are you doing? I'm fine. How about you? The smiles and the small talk can all have an alienating effect. And it can feel like no one else in the world really understands what you're going through.

In such times, you can be surrounded by people and yet be lonely. And for that reason, it can be easy to withdraw from community and become insular.
But when you feel like an island, when you feel that there's a vast chasm between your pain and others' ability to empathize, there is something you can do and this is the first step of lament, to turn to God.
It says in verse 2, In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. People turn to various things when they are in trouble. How would you complete that sentence?
Not how you think you should complete that sentence. How would you complete that sentence? Just looking at your life and how you have lived. In the day of my trouble, I seek fill in the blank. What's your first impulse when you're in trouble?
[14:32] When you're hurting? What or whom do you turn to to rescue you? Do you seek to escape into a fantasy world through TV shows or YouTube or ESPN or social media?

Do you try to numb your pain with substances like nicotine or marijuana or alcohol? Do you try to turn to your husband or your wife, your mom or your best friend?
Maybe you don't turn to anyone else. Maybe you just turn inward and isolate and shut down. Maybe you become despairing and suicidal. The first step of lament is not to turn inward onto ourselves or to turn to other people or things but to turn to God.
That's the first step of lament. To seek the Lord in the days of trouble. In the days of my trouble, I seek the Lord. After turning to the Lord, the second step of lament is to groan to God.
To cry out. And we're going to talk in more detail about these specific steps over the coming four or five weeks. And so the second step is to groan to God and cry out to Him. Verse 1 says, I cry aloud

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to God.
[15:50] Aloud to God and He will hear me. A more literal translation of that would be my voice cries out to God. My voice to God and He will hear me.

Asaph is not silent in the midst of his pain. He gives voice to his pain and he cries aloud to God. And the repetition of that phrase, aloud to God, aloud to God, conveys Asaph's deep feeling and just this outpouring of his heart and his desperate desire to be heard by God.
He's so desperate to be heard by God, he says here that he cries out day and night. He says in verse 2, In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying.
Stretching out one's hands to God is a common posture of prayer like this or like this that we see throughout Scripture. It is a physical expression of neediness and longing, that desperation.
Similar to how some of us raise our hands when we are singing worship songs, day and night, the psalmist is reaching out for God, seeking the Lord in prayer. And yet, he says at the end of verse 2, my soul refuses to be comforted.
[17:07] I would be lying to you if I told you that the moment you turn to God in prayer, all your sorrows and hurts will just melt away. The Bible is too real to give us that kind of pat answers and sanitized formulas.

The psalmist is honest. He is crying aloud to God and seeking the Lord day and night. He is stretching out his hand in prayer and yet he says, my soul refuses to be comforted.
His soul is dejected and he is inconsolable. I hope this is a comfort to those of you who have experienced this. In the midst of deep pain, sometimes your soul refuses to be comforted.
That doesn't mean that you are less of a Christian. That doesn't mean that you didn't pray correctly. And that doesn't mean that God has abandoned you. It just means that you are in a lot of pain.
But, and this is very important, you must not, for that reason, stop praying. Telling yourself that it is no use. Look at what Asaph does in verses 3-4.
[18:20] He continues to turn to God even when his soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah. You hold my eyelids open.

I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Remembering God should be a delight and meditating on God's work should be strengthening for us. But because the psalmist is so enmeshed in his present trouble, thinking about God makes him moan.
It makes his spirit faint. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot make sense of his present circumstances. He does not see how God can be acting for his good in his present situation.
So he is losing sleep. And he says, his eyelids are held open. He is at a loss for words. He says, I cannot speak.
His words become this inarticulate moan. He is too weary even to speak. Like that feeling when you feel something stuck inside your heart and when you just have that lump coming up in your throat and sometimes words can't quite express your pain.
[19:28] So you just cry and you groan. But that's better than silent despair. Again, this is, I mentioned to you, Mark Vrogop, his book, Dark Claws and Deep Mercy, he says this, giving God the silent treatment is the ultimate manifestation of unbelief.

Despair lives under the hopeless resignation that God doesn't care, that he doesn't hear and nothing is ever going to change. People who believe this stop praying.
They give up. So even when you feel like you're not praying well, even when you feel like all you can do is just stretch out your hand to God and groan and moan and cry in the presence of God. That's better than despair because it takes faith to groan to God. Because in your pain you're coming to God and saying, God, this is really hard.
God, this is really painful and I don't know if I can handle it anymore. But you're still coming to God and bringing that to Him. You're talking to Him. That's better.
[20:43] So groan. And look at how boldly the psalmist voices his complaint in verses 7 and 9. This is the third step of lament. Appealing to God on the basis of His character and His promises or calling God to account.

He says, Will the Lord spurn forever? Never again be favorable? Has His steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time?
Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His compassion? Asaph is here just getting messy with God.

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He's asking hard questions and expressing his doubts openly. He's calling God to account. He's trying to arouse God into action. Sometimes I think Christians don't pray when they are suffering, when they are struggling with their faith because they feel that it is wrong to express these kinds of sentiments.
But these are not false, intrusive thoughts that we're supposed to suppress. Of course, it's not objectively true that God's steadfast love has forever ceased.
[21:56] It has not. However, it truly describes our subjective feeling in the midst of intense personal struggle. So it's honest.

And it's better to voice that doubt, that complaint, that groaning to God than to remain silent. Our healing process will be stunted if we don't express honestly our doubts and questions to God.
19th century Scottish pastor Alexander McLaren comments on this psalm this way, quote, he faces with trembling the terrible possibilities. And his doubts are better put into plain speech than lying diffused and darkening like poisonous mists in his heart.
A thought, a thought, be it good or bad, can be dealt with when it is made articulate. So the end of the despondent half of the psalm is marked by the bringing to distinct speech of the suspicions which floated in the singer's mind and made him miserable.
when the thoughts are made articulate it can be dealt with. If we never express our questions and doubts to God those doubts will lie diffused and darkening like poisonous mists in our hearts.
[23:13] But once we air out those doubts in open prayer when we turn to God with them they can be dealt with. The voicing of these doubts mark the end of the dejected half of this psalm and it transitions us to the more hopeful half of the psalm.

Why? Because God answers us when we speak to him honestly with earnest questions. Notice that verses 7 and 9 are alluding to the revelation of God's character in Exodus 34, 6 to 7.
The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.
So he's appealing to these characteristics that God himself has revealed himself as. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?
Asaph is appealing to God, God, you said, you said, God, you forgive iniquity and transgression and sin but will you not spurn me forever? You said that you will regard me with favor.
[24:21] Will you never again be favorable? God, you said you keep steadfast love for thousands but has your steadfast love forever ceased? The word steadfast love translates that Hebrew word that combines the idea of love and loyalty.

But God, have you ceased to be loyal? Is your steadfast love no longer steadfast but fickle and fleeting? Are you breaking your promises, God?
God, God, you said you are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger but have you forgotten to be gracious? God, will you never again be favorable?
Have you forgotten? God, you said you are slow to anger but has your anger flared up suddenly to me? Have you shut up your compassion?
That word compassion, if you remember from Exodus 34, is the word, same word that's translated in Exodus 34, 6 as merciful. It's a word that comes from the Hebrew word for womb.
[25:27] It captures the tender and embracing womb-like love of a mother toward her children. God, instead of opening up your womb-like compassion to me as your child, have you shut up that compassion within you?

These are some hard-hitting questions. heart-wrenching questions. You need to voice these questions to God because when you do that, you're inviting God to address your doubts.
We're appealing to God to answer on the basis of His character. This is not who you said you are, God. It's only then that we do that that the dark clouds start to break.
And that brings me to my second point. Remember the Lord of the days of old. There's a contrast in this psalm between the day of my trouble, remember that from verse 2, and the days of old in verse 5, and the wonders of old in verse 11.
Instead of wallowing in self-pity and fixating only on the day of my trouble, Asaph chooses to remember God's redemptive acts from the days of old.
[26:43] This is the trouble with us humans sometimes. We have recency bias, which is a cognitive bias that favors recent events over historic events.

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We tend to give the greatest weight to our most recent experience, and forget all about the past experiences. So when trouble hits us, we can let it warp our view of God and make us forget all about how faithful God has been, and how he has proved his goodness and faithfulness over and over again to us.
But we need to resist that tendency. Asaph says in verses 10 to 12, then I said, I will appeal to this, to the ears of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord.
Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. The word meditate in verse 12 was already used twice before in verses 3 and 6.
And the word remember repeated twice here in verse 11 already occurred two more times in verses 3 and 6 as well. So these are key words that tell us the main point, the main teaching of this psalm.
[28:00] How can we maintain hope when our life seems hopeless? Scripture's simple yet profound answer to that question is to remember God and meditate on his works.

Remember from verse 3 that this didn't seem to be working for Asaph at first. He said, when I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. At first, remembering God only made him moan in pain and struggle.
Meditating on God's word only made him faint. But Asaph didn't stop there and that's the key. He continued. He kept on groaning and he kept on appealing to God. And with time and perseverance, he could finally see the silver lining in the clouds, the sunlight creeping in and the clouds starting to break.
And this brings us to the fourth step of lament. Remembering. Remembering God's goodness and faithfulness. And it's important to note that you can't short circuit this process and just go straight to remembering.
especially in deep suffering and pain. When you try to give people counsel, give grieving people some counsel and comfort, if you go straight to remembering, without encouraging to turn to God, without encouraging to groan to God in the midst of their pain, and without appealing to God honestly from that place of pain and suffering and doubt and questions, that's when you come across as you're giving pat answers.
[29:34] like Job's friends that Job described as miserable comforters, miserable physicians.

So you can't short circuit lament, but you also cannot skip this step of remembering. The lament psalms in scripture always have a turning point.
They provide time and space for the expression of grief and sorrow, doubts and questions, but they don't let you wallow there permanently. There's always a turning point in the psalm, usually with transitional words like but or yet, where doubt starts to give way to hope and faith.
And here in Psalm 77, it's the word then in verse 10. As Christians, we must situate the day of my trouble in the days of old and the wonders of old.
We must not let the present day of trouble make us forget the faithfulness of God, demonstrated in its redemptive deeds of the past. It is no surprise then that verse 11 is the first time in this psalm where Asaph uses the personal name for God.
[30:48] Notice that the word Lord in verse 11 is in all caps. That's a reverent way that the Bible translators translate the name of God that's revealed in Exodus 3, Yehovah or Yahweh.

Up to this point, the psalmist has referred to God more generically as God or as Lord, which in lowercase just means Master. Even the term most high in verse 10 is not a specific name for God but uses a generic word for God in Hebrew.
But it's precisely at the moment when the psalmist remembers that God is not just some God, some abstract reality or some impersonal force but that he is his God.
The God whom he knows personally and by whom he is known personally. Yahweh who revealed himself to God's people throughout history and specifically intervened and saved his people time and time again.
It's precisely at that moment of the psalm that he turns from despair to hope and faith filled remembrance.
[31:58] And when the psalmist starts to do this, something remarkable happens. Up to this point, remember the psalmist has been predominantly using the first person singular pronouns.

I did this and I did that and I feel this. But as soon as he starts remembering God personally and his mighty deeds of old, his focus shifts from looking at and pitting himself to beholding and exalting God.

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His language shifts from the first person to the second person. Look at verses 13 to 15. Your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God?
You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.
Selah. note the powerful repetition in verse 13. You with your arm redeemed your people.
[33:04] You belong to God and he redeems you because you are his with his mighty arm. Notice the first instance of the first person plural pronoun in verse 13.

What God is great like our God? Prior to this it was all I's and my's and me's but as soon as the psalmist shifts that focus from the trouble he is in to who God is and what he has done, he remembers that this God is so much bigger than just his God.
He is our God. When you in your pain have a hard time remembering the goodness and faithfulness of God, let the other saints remind you.
the times of struggle are the times when you need the community of God's people the most. Just like when you're sick and you least want to eat is when you most need to eat healthy foods.
When you feel like you want to withdraw and isolate and hunker down, that's precisely when you need to draw near to the saints of God, come together with God's people and let them remind you so that you can say along with them what God is great like our God.
[34:21] What God created the cosmos with the word of his mouth like our God. What God chose us before the foundation of the world to belong to him and to be like him.

What God justifies sinners like our God. What God adopts his people as his own children like our God.
what God is gracious and generous and merciful and compassionate like our God. There is no one like our God. There is no God but him.
Then in verses 16 to 20, the psalmist remembers the climactic instance of God's redemption in Israel's history up to that point. In the Exodus, he writes, when the water saw you, O God, when the water saw you, they were afraid.
Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder. Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world.
[35:26] The earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters. Yet your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

This is a beautifully poetic way to conclude this psalm. Remember how I mentioned to you that verse one where he says, I cry aloud to God, aloud to God. In Hebrew it's literally my voice cries out to God.
My voice to God. Well, if you translate verses 17 to 18 more literally, it would read, the clouds poured out water, the skies gave forth voice.
Your arrow flashed on every side. The voice of your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook. Because the Hebrew word for thunder and crash is the same word that means voice in verse one.
Similarly, in verse two, the psalmist mentioned that he stretched out his hand to God. And here in verse 20, we are told that God led his people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. the same word, hand.
[36:28] And in addition to that, we saw in verse 10, how God delivered with his right hand. And in verse 15, that he redeemed his people with his arm. So these closing verses of the psalm are a rejoinder, an answer from God to the psalmist's desperate cry in the opening verses.

As Asaph raises his voice to God in the day of his trouble, he remembers God's voice speaking from those days of old. As the psalmist stretches forth his hand in desperate longing for God, he remembers how God stretched out his hand to redeem his people and rescue them from their day of trouble in those days of old.
So, brothers and sisters, in our remembrance of God, in our remembrance of his redemptive deeds of old, God is stretching out his hand to grab hold of you in the mire of your suffering and pain.
God answers your cries of lament with his voice when you remember his faithfulness in his word.
And I love the perspective of verse 16.

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When the waters saw you, oh God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep trembled. It's a very effective use of personification, which is a poetic device where you give human attributes to non-human objects or non-human things like water.
[37:59] Waters cannot see anything. Waters cannot be afraid or tremble. And yet, that's how the psalmist describes the splitting and crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14.

And this is a remarkably faith-filled perspective, filled with faith, looking back retroactively from what happened in Exodus 14. Because if you go back and actually look at the original narrative in Exodus 14, and you read what happened there, it doesn't say the waters were afraid.
With the impassable Red Sea ahead of them, and then the rampaging elite Egyptian army right on their heels behind them, it says in Exodus 14.
The people of Israel feared greatly. But Asaph is here helping us to see that situation in history and by extension, our current troubles, not with our eyes, but with faith.
The waters saw God and then the waters were afraid and it trembled. Whatever it is that makes you tremble with fear, insert that thing into verse 16, in the place of the word waters.
[39:22] Instead of staring at the trouble from your perspective, try seeing it from God's perspective because it's not God who is trembling, it's your waters that are trembling. Your job trouble sees God and is afraid and it trembles.

Your relational trouble sees God and it's afraid and it trembles in your mental health issues. See God and is afraid and it trembles your besetting sins.
See God and it afraid and it trembles so don't let your pain and sorrow blind you to the presence of God. He is in your life.
Bring him back into the picture and lift up your gaze onto him. Looking back on the crossing of the Red Sea, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 1-2, that the Israelites all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
Paul is making a biblical theological connection here between Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and the Christian going under the water and coming out in baptism. The nation of Israel escaped their slave masters and were reborn in a way through the crossing of the Red Sea.
[40:47] Similarly, Christian baptism represents the breaking once and for all of our slavery to sin and death. Romans 6, 1-4 has this to say about baptism. What shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
We were with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life. Beloved saints, beloved child of God, are you weighed down this morning by guilt and shame?
Are you despairing that you can ever be forgiven of your sins? That you can ever be delivered from your sinful patterns? Let your sins behold the cross of Jesus Christ and let it fear and tremble. Because Jesus paid for it. He died so he no longer has a claim on your life and you can be free. You can no longer be a slave to sin.
[42:11] the resurrection power of Jesus is available to you by the Spirit of God so that you can walk in the newness of life.

So let's join Asaph in this song. Let us remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, let us remember his wonders of old. Let us ponder all his work and meditate on his mighty deeds.
your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God? What God is great like our God?
Let's pray. Yes, Lord, no, God is great like you, Lord. there is no one like you who is merciful and compassionate, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.
there is no God who rules the cosmos and yet takes interest in our puny lives, in the details of our lives, and hears our every groan.
[43:43] There is no God like you, O Lord God, who draws near to us and hears us and answers our prayers. there is no God like you, Lord God, who sent his only son, who took on human flesh that he might know our infirmities and know our weaknesses and be able to empathize with us and carried our sin and died in our place.

And because of that, you alone are God. You alone, God, deserve our worship. You alone, God, deserve our lives' sacrifice of praise.

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Help us to fix our eyes upon you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Amen.

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