

Sharing the good news  
of Jesus and His  
Kingdom and  
equipping the church  
to do the same.

*Life*  
JOHN 20:31  
IN HIS NAME



Greg West, Evangelist

***"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.***

***Are they not in your record?" - Psalm 56:8***

# January 2021



**"TEAR BOTTLES"**

**POTTERY BY SYBIL WEST**

## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, Jan. 10, 10:00am:** Preaching  
at Virginia Beach Christian Church.

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***"My dear friend, when grief presses  
you to the dust, worship there."***

CHARLES SPURGEON

# Entering 2021 with Lament and Hope



I'm not sure about you, but this is how I'm entering 2021: with lament and hope, a living hope! A number of years ago I came across a teaching video by one of my favorite singers/songwriters: Michael Card. The title intrigued me: *Lamenting is Worship!* It's a deep concept and for a full understanding, you probably need to be grieving.

In my own journey, lament is somewhat new and helpful. In the past, I would spend my energies praying for the negative circumstances to change, or I would worry about them getting worse. In lament we are not trying to change anything. Rather, it is when we acknowledge the darkness and tragedy while taking all of it to God. In some Christian circles, people feel the need to be "up" all the time, "Too blessed to be depressed!" It's as if admitting things are really bad means we've failed somehow. Lament can help. Lament is about being honest about where you are and letting God, friends, and family meet you there.

It can also be a powerful witness to those who don't know Christ when we grieve honestly yet persevere through painful times. The Apostle Paul urges us to: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). The "tear bottles" pictured at the newsletter's beginning are made by a skilled potter, who happens to be my mom! What a revelation from God's word, "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your record" (Psalm 56:8)? Not a tear is shed without God knowing, God is with us in our suffering. My mom made the

"tear bottles" for some victims of gun violence in Virginia Beach.

We have a book of the Bible titled *Lamentations*. It is the response of God's people to the city of Jerusalem being conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. While it's attributed to Jeremiah the prophet, the book is written in poetic form and may be a compilation of the laments of the people. The passage below is stated in a context of lament.

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*Yet this I call to mind and  
therefore I have hope:  
Because of the Lord's great  
love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.*

## LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23

The Hebrew word for "great love" in this passage is *chesed*. It is the Old Testament word for grace! Here, we see the focus shift from the terrible circumstances to the character of God! This is a great lesson for us. Knowing who God is gives us hope! A faith that is dependent on things going well is not a faith in God. In spite of the disaster and suffering it is still true, "His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Our nation and world have experienced a painful year of loss and death. Suffering comes to us all, but it doesn't have the last word and it cannot steal a hope anchored in God's love through Christ. Michael Card says, "After all, God used suffering to save the world."

I pray you are entering 2021 with a living hope that lifts you through the suffering and losses you have experienced. Our hope is in the crucified One, the risen One, who is Christ the Lord. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). In that overflow, may others come to hope in Christ as well!