



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

16 Days of Activism against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Orange the World: “Fund, Prevent, Respond, Collect” Liturgy for Sunday 29 November 2020

In the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we pray this week with the people and churches of Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore.

In a time of physical distancing, let this liturgy unite our hearts and minds as we prayerfully seek to overcome Sexual and Gender-Based Violence together.

Opening song: choose a song or chant to prepare our hearts for worship

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies – A Psalm of David (Psalms 13:1-4)

One: How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?

Many: How long, Lord?

One: How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Many: How long, Lord?

One: Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

Many: Look on me and answer, Lord?

One: And my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

**Many: Look on me and answer Lord, so that I may rise in front of those
who made me fall?**

Scripture

The Old Testament reading is from 2 Samuel 13: 1-22

Some time passed. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. Then she took the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get out!" But she said to him, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her." (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times. So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. But Tamar put

ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.” So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom’s house. When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn. But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.

Word of God, Word of life.

Many: Thanks be to God.

Reflection:

Refer to the contextual bible study “Lamentation of Tamar,” included at the end of this document, or [access online here](#).

Intercessory prayers

One: “No, No” ! she cries and pleads. “Do not do anything so foolish to me; do not force me.”

We pray today for the many Tamars all over the world who face physical, mental, sexual and verbal abuse from their family members, their intimate partners, and their close friends. We remember all those women and young children who cry “No, no! do not force me”, and are unheeded by their oppressors. Lord, in your mercy.

Many: Hear our prayers.

One: “As for me, where could I carry my shame?” she cries.

We pray for all survivors of rape and sexual abuse who carry with them the added burden of shame and stigma. In a world where victim blaming prevents many women from seeking justice, we pray for the transformation of all those attitudes that further assault the dignity of those who have been abused. Lord, in your mercy.

Many: Hear our prayers.

One: “Get out” ! “Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her,” he screams.

We pray for all those for whom sexual abuse also means public humiliation – because of their culture, caste, or class background. We remember those who are driven out of homes and

communities, paraded naked, beaten to death because of patriarchal impunity – all those whose hearts are broken and whose bodies are torn. O Lord, comfort them as they seek new ways of being. Lord, in your mercy.

Many: Hear our prayers.

One: With torn robes, ash on her head and hand on her head, she weeps.

We pray for all those who lament and bear their abuse in isolation, as the world turns to the other side. We remember those for whom the path to justice and healing is not only long but also lonely. Lord, in your mercy.

Many: Hear our prayers.

One: “Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart, says Absalom.

We pray for all those who are silenced from speaking out about their abuse, by the abuse of love and power. We remember with repentance the silence of the churches in speaking out against child abuse and rape. Lead us we pray from complicity to solidarity. Lord, in your mercy.

Many: Hear our prayers.

Lord's Prayer

Song: There is a Balm in Gilead

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN9JALQRMb0>

African American spiritual



There is a balm in Gil - e - ad, to make the wound - ed whole.

Fine



There is a balm in Gil - e - ad, to heal the sin - sick soul.



1. Some - times I feel dis - cour - aged, and think my work's in
2. Don't ev - er feel dis - cour - aged, for Je - sus is your
3. If you can - not preach like Pe - ter, if you can - not pray like

D.C. al Fine



vain, but then the Ho - ly Spir - it re - vives my soul a - gain.
friend, who, if you ask for knowl - edge, will nev - er fail to lend.
Paul, you can tell the love of Je - sus, who died to save us all.

Benediction

L: With wisdom and understanding,
with justice and mercy,
with courage and commitment,
may you (we) be blessed,
this day
and every day, by the God who has loved us all into life.

**Many: Give us life
according to Your promise;
give us life
according to Your justice;
give us life
according to Your word,**

Amen.

(Prayer taken from women Prayer, women song by Miriam Therese Winter, Meyer Stone books, 1987)

Liturgy prepared by Rebecca Sangeetha Daniel, LWF

Contextual Bible Study: Lamentation of Tamar – 2 Samuel 13:1-21

Context:

This passage is usually titled “the rape of Tamar”, but I would like to retitle it as “Lamentation of Tamar”. Tamar is raped by her half-brother Amnon. It is one of the passages in the Bible dealing with violence against women that takes place in the context of intimate relationships, within spaces that are often considered safe. It teaches us how the danger to women often does not come from outsiders, but can also come from insiders – people whom we trust. It also highlights the dilemmas people face when responding to abuse that takes place within familial spaces and relationships.

Guiding question:

- Is sexual abuse that takes place within families a taboo issue in your context / churches?

Background of the text:

Most of the abuses against children and vulnerable groups take place in the ‘circles of trust’. In this biblical passage, Amnon gains the trust of his half-sister Tamar, invites her to his home and abuses her.

The story also highlights the problem of toxic masculinities. When Jonadab, Amnon’s ‘crafty’ friend and cousin, hears the reason for Amnon’s sadness he suggests the deceitful idea of luring Tamar to Amnon’s house with the intention of taking advantage of her. This prompts us to reflect on the role of friendships in perpetuating toxic masculinities, which see women as objects that can be taken by force or deceit.

The tragedy of Tamar’s story is that she is the lone voice lamenting and protesting her rape publicly. She puts ashes on her head, tears the long robe that she was wearing; puts her hand on her head, and goes away, crying loudly (v.19). This is completely different from the responses of Absalom, her brother, and David, her father. Absalom is angry with Amnon, but asks his sister Tamar to “keep quiet for now” (v.20) before he takes matters into his own hands. “Keep quiet” is a common response that many women, who have been sexually abused, face from those close to them. The social stigma surrounding rape is so strong that often the victims are silenced, even by those who love them. King David is angry on hearing what happened to Tamar, but the text shows him as doing nothing

about it. He remains almost a silent spectator – who refuses to challenge his firstborn son on his misdeeds.

Today as we reflect on responding to gender-based violence, one thing we need to confront as churches is the silence and stigma that surrounds gender-based violence. We need to break this tyranny and conspiracy of silence and ensure that the cries of lament and protest of the survivors of gender-based violence are heard and addressed appropriately. Only then can we make space for justice and healing for the survivors of sexual violence in our midst.

Question to ponder:

- How can our churches and communities ensure justice for those who have survived sexual violence?