

A Call for Practicing Hospitality Based on Lament in Preaching For a Wounded Community

Eliana Ah Rum Ku, Ph.D.,

Toronto School of Theology, The University of Toronto

Abstract: Covid-19 has caused countless losses and has resulted in the global community having to face threats of hatred, distancing, and intersectional injustice. In this struggle, the wounds, from disproportionate job loss to racially-based violence, have not been equal for everyone. The experiences of Covid-19 have left scars on communities and now the challenge for faith communities and preachers is how to rebuild communities into settings where we all can live well together with our shared experiences of woundedness. This study argues that our commitment needs not only to rebuild social, political, and economic systems, but also to consider how to deal with accumulated wounds within communities. In this sense, hospitality plays an essential role in the vision of community reconstruction. Concurrently, lament works as a force that can initiate and maintain hospitality. Finally, we consider how the practice of lament-based hospitality can be practiced in sermons.

Key Words: Hospitality, Lament, Covid-19, Jael (Judges 4:17-24), Preaching

Challenges for a Wounded Community

Covid-19 has brought countless losses impacting every corner of our lives. Even more, Covid-19 was not experienced similarly by everyone. Those who were economically disadvantaged as well as racial minorities disproportionately bore the weight of discriminatory treatment and negligence, including those living in areas with poor sanitation and limited health care.¹ According to UN Women (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), Covid-19 has resulted in an additional 47 million women and girls living in extreme poverty and 50% of women have experienced violence directly and indirectly since the pandemic began.² From disproportionate job loss to heightened gender and race-based violence, the marginalized have experienced specific health, economic, and social impacts that must be addressed through policy interventions.³ Although the wounded communities affected by various losses may have started to rebuild social, political, and economic systems, these efforts also face the challenge of dealing carefully with relational wounds between community members in ways that *empower and protect all of us*, especially paying attention to those who have suffered from the violent acts of hatred and isolation.⁴

Xenophobia, discrimination, and indirect/direct violence have increased worldwide, starting with a phobia of Chinese persons as Covid was first reported in the city of Wuhan, China

¹ Namsoon Kang, *Dating Derrida: I Mourn, Therefore I Am* (Paju: Planet B, 2022), 135.

² Júlia Ledur, "COVID-19 is Affecting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Other People of Color the Most," last modified March 7, 2021, <https://covidtracking.com/race>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "COVID-19: Rebuilding for Resilience," UN Women, accessed November 5, 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience?gclid=CjwKCAjwyaWZBhBGEiwACslQo4IzkqpuRbtL1daz55kA6wYjUEcI2QeXJwvRdGBqsoCaeFDxCv5N9RoCuOAQAvD_BwE.

in 2019.⁵ Discrimination has been reported against people of East Asian and Southeast Asian appearance. Research has also reported that the association of this epidemic with certain social groups may have been politically motivated in the United States to encourage suspicion against immigrants, exhibiting a wide range of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors.⁶ Online hate speech and physical hate crimes against religious groups have also increased as gatherings of religious communities have been accused of spreading the virus.⁷ The communities to be reconstructed need to pursue the creation of a new form of neighborhood and community with those whose lives have been harmed through indifference, loneliness, inequality, discrimination, hidden unhappiness, and animosity.⁸

This paper argues that hospitality is essential to rebuilding wounded communities because when hospitality is withheld, the communities may experience inhumane levels of alienation.⁹ Also, the power of hospitality can contribute to healing the social fabric of injustice and division.¹⁰ To practice hospitality amid the wounds of relationships between people in local communities and larger communities, members need to practice mutually empathic responses to the wounds they have experienced. Shared lament can provide a sense of mutual connection as people recognize and practice hospitality that embraces lament. This is because lament makes people tell and listen to the honest responses of persons who are suffering, revealing their wounds, and leading people to participate in others' suffering. It is not an end in and of itself; however, lament allows space for hope in all its complexities, including lament that is voiced in preaching.

Call for Hospitality

In that period of disruption of ordinary life and the loss of precious things, many people have created boundaries of safety, dividing communities into groups of "us" and "them." These divisions have exacerbated a fear of "otherness" that has been increasingly expressed in society. "Difference" has been socially constructed in relation to race, gender, class, disability, age, etc., and "other" or "otherness" has been treated as a topic for theological discourse and a subject of ethical practice. Scholars have discovered that socially vulnerable groups are "being othered."¹¹ Hearing the experiences of non-mainstream and unrecognized voices has become a shared struggle to resist, influence, and transform mainstream narratives.¹²

1. An Ethical Approach to Hospitality

⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide," May 12, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>.

⁶ Tyler T. Reny & Matt A. Barreto, "Xenophobia in the Time of Pandemic: Othering, Anti-Asian Attitudes, and COVID-19," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 10, no. 2 (2022): 213, 225.

⁷ Katya Andrusz, "Countering religious hatred is critical to restore COVID-worn democracy and security, says OSCE human rights head," *The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 20 August, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/495850>.

⁸ Philip Sheldrake, *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 3.

⁹ N. Lynne Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 55–56.

¹⁰ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 1.

¹¹ Sarah Ahmed, *Strange Encounter: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 55–60.

¹² Rebecca S. Chopp, "Theorizing Feminist Theology," in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms*, eds. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 226.

Hospitality toward strangers was a command given to the Israelites in the Bible (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 10:19; 24:19; Ezek. 22:7, 29). Hospitality was valued as a moral obligation, given that everyone experiences being a stranger in one circumstance or another. These days, however, not everyone is equally invited to the place of hospitality. In the North American context, for example, immigrants are often invited without speaking power in relation to the realities of social oppression. Furthermore, migrants have frequently remained strangers even after being initially welcomed.¹³ Although the United States has seen an explosion of immigrants since the 1990s—in numbers that approached 44.9 million in 2019—immigrants are deprived of social power for various reasons, such as language, visa status, economic situation, education, etc.¹⁴ Due to the international situation, refugees come to the West through the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees have been forced to leave their homes to escape persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations, but in their new homes they are again exposed to differentiation, distancing, and hatred in relation to difficulties related to language, status, and anxiety.¹⁵ While awareness of the “stranger” can be used as a tool to address the need for hospitality and to understand the other, it can also be used for reasons of demotion, exclusion, silence, or repression.¹⁶ “Other” has also been used to suggest inferiority in comparison with mainstream society.¹⁷ Despite efforts to make discriminatory communities more inclusive, the hospitality frame has often set boundaries for strangers or created a host-guest dichotomy.

Thomas Reynolds ponders the dangers of sharing basic vulnerabilities in an exchange ethic based on the recognition of the host-guest relationship.¹⁸ He criticizes the one-sided, top-down approach that stems from the abundance of giving because of patriarchally implementing the host-guest dichotomy.¹⁹ Reynolds calls attention to four versions of insecure hospitality²⁰: 1) a level at which one is willing to put up with others without taking any risks; 2) a way that denies the agency and freedom of others, from a high position and without consent, one can draw others into hospitality and take the initiative as a host; 3) a way to reach out to the marginalized and invite others inside to share the affluence, but only if the host retains the initiative and the guest follows the host's way will the guest be included in the invitation; and 4) a means of producing strangers by itself. Reynolds considers these cases as hermeneutic violence in which the stranger is already determined by the sovereign subject, the family or the communal state.²¹

¹³ Hanbyul Park, “Welcoming Beyond Recognizing: The Significance of Encounter in Understanding Christian Hospitality in the Multicultural Context,” *Asian American Theological Forum* 6, no 2 (2019).

¹⁴ Jeanne Batalova, Mary Hanna, and Christopher Levesque, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States,” *Migration Policy Institute*, updated February 11, 2021.

https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states?gclid=Cj0KCCQjw1ouKBhC5ARIsAHXNMI9s7cSe0oAFJ38HCsY0uj6jUVUrXWAtJO5Gm2GH7CmjUkIV937gOnsaAiAqEALw_wcB.

¹⁵ Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill, *Healing Our Broken Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2018), 117.

¹⁶ Letty M. Russell, 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Thomas E. Reynolds, “Beyond Hospitality? Unsettling Theology and Migration in Canada,” in *Migration and Religion: Negotiating Sites of Hospitality, Resistance, and Vulnerability*, eds. Andrea Bieler et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019), 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

In recent ethical discourses, attempts have been made to overcome the power risk and dichotomy in the host-guest relationship. Letty Russell identifies hospitality as a Christian tradition of how to move toward interdependence without destroying others.²² Russell believes that hospitality is a two-way street of reciprocal ministry where we swap roles and learn most from people who are different than ourselves or whom we think of as others.²³ She has shifted the thinking from a dualistic hermeneutics of distancing away from the other with “the language of otherness” to thinking of “a hermeneutics of hospitality” in response to the fact that the marginalized and excluded are often labeled “others” and are alienated.²⁴ Facing the challenges of a world where experiences of discrimination and suffering are often rooted in contempt for others, Russell argues that a feminist hermeneutics of hospitality can make it clear that no one is an “other” in God's sight.²⁵ In this regard, Russell argues that the capacity for hospitality involves the ability to overcome injustice and division within the fabric of society.²⁶

Postcolonial feminist interpretation has laid the foundation for ‘host-guest’ to be viewed as “Partnership” or “Cohost and Coguest.” The host-guest paradigm distinguishes between *I* and *another-I* in a dichotomous way.²⁷ It is to give *I* the exclusive right to be treated in a position of superiority, and to make others the object of treatment in a position of inferiority.²⁸ Choi Hee An argues that the disintegration of both the host and the guest is necessary to break free from the isolation of *me* and *others* and become part of each other.²⁹ She envisions radical hospitality of belonging to each other by become cohost and coguest, extending the other/other's existence to being one of us.³⁰ Therefore, an ethical approach shows that understandings of hospitality can vary but can also pursue how to live together well, especially by being hypersensitive to the marginalized.

2. Restricted Narratives and Hospitality

Just as Emilie Townes argues that a narrative (of a white) cannot be seen as including the whole of black formation because one understanding of the Christian narrative alone is not enough to contain the complexity of race, gender and class oppression, various narratives that have been muted and ignored need to be heard.³¹ According to C. Melissa Snarr, Townes's concept of a socially resilient self is socially constructed and not completely determined by the history of an oppressive system but emerges from lament that will lead to the oracle of salvation.³² In the Hebrew Bible, lament is used as a counter testimony, as a confession of faith by the Israelites within the core testimony, and as a means of overcoming social crises and gaining resilience. Although lament consisted of complaining about God's faithfulness and expressing the reality of human pain, it was another expression of faith that eagerly awaited God's salvation. From this point of view, the Bible shows that most circumstances of human life

²² Russell, 42–43.

²³ Ibid., 15.

²⁴ Ibid., 24.

²⁵ Ibid., 43.

²⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁷ Choi Hee An, *A Postcolonial Self: Korean Immigrant Theology and Church* (New York: Suny Press, 2015), 140.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 141.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ C. Melissa Snarr, *Social Selves and Political Reforms: Five Visions in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2007), 111.

³² Ibid., 112.

including suffering are being told in the language of faith. Therefore, listening to the narratives that have been silenced within a wounded community is an important way of practicing lament.

Hospitality can begin when a community has an openness that is not closed by anyone's standards. It may escape from the epistemic violence and oppression that occurs when the community forces upon everyone a dominant narrative, creating instead a community in which all people can feel that they belong, and accept many fragmented and diverse experiences through a deep sense of solidarity in Christ. As Rieger claims, listening to the other opens up new ways to hear the divine other.³³

Listening to each other's different perspectives not only allows us to discern differences in multiple points of view but also discover shared feelings.³⁴ Rifkin strongly argues that "narrative is critical to transforming empathic distress to empathic engagement."³⁵ Listening to diverse narratives teaches us the importance of justifying others' right to have their own "reality." Respect for others and new forms of mindfulness about others' singular histories and idiosyncrasies trigger more empathic responses.³⁶ In this challenge, the self is not removed, but redefined through relationships with others.³⁷ The challenge is about acknowledging the experience, acknowledging the need for help, and feeling deeply about one's life with others and sharing the depths of those feelings. It stems from a deep sense of community and responsibility to each other, not from narcissism or self-pity.³⁸ Hospitality offers a place for free expression where who you are and where every point of view matters. Ultimately, a community is "not to merely *make a place* for hospitality, but looks to see how, as a host, her hospitality *makes a place*."³⁹

Lament for Hospitality

The theological task of making hospitality possible is not to identify a dominant experience and follow its lead but to connect the different pieces of experiences and to develop a radical vision of hospitality by retrieving experiences from invisibility.⁴⁰ Experience is not monolithic and needs to be reconfirmed and reconstructed in a community that is intentionally open to the excluded.⁴¹ In a wounded community, lament as a wounded word of sufferers is needed to heal traumas and wounds from the violence of isolation and hatred and to start a shared dialogue.⁴² To be heard, lament in the faith community is the beginning of a conversation about wounds, acceptance of wounds, and an effort to heal wounds while raising fierce questions

³³ Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 109.

³⁴ Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (New York: J.P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2009), 186.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 181.

³⁷ Rieger, 107.

³⁸ Emilie M. Townes, "Just Awaiting and Aweeping: Grief, Lament, and Hope as We Face the End of Life," in *Faith, Health, and Healing in African American Life*, eds. Stephanie Y. Mitchem and Emilie M. Townes (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008), 89.

³⁹ Arthur M. Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 52.

⁴⁰ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 12.

⁴¹ Rieger, 104.

⁴² Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truth: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 183.

to God, illuminating individuals' and communities' wounds and the wounds of the world, and responding to the invitation to life. Lament does not stop at dealing with personal suffering but calls for a movement toward justice that uncovers historical trauma and the narrative that provokes it.⁴³ "Without the practice of public lament, collective work for justice is blocked, paralyzed, unable to begin."⁴⁴ Lament serves as a starting point and a force to continue the conversation for pursuing the theological task of hospitality in a wounded community.⁴⁵

1. The Healing Power of Lament

The first condition of healing is seeing and speaking of pain.⁴⁶ However, healing requires "a hearing" along with restoration of the voice of the one who suffers because personal restoration cannot be separated from the restoration of life in the community. Robert Schreiter says that social suffering and its reconciliation need to be accepted by others before any movement can begin.⁴⁷ Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah also argue that when a community accepts the uncomfortable truths about trauma within it, it is guided to the healing power of lament.⁴⁸ June Dickie proposes lament as a healing way to help the reconnection with future life taking place through the experience of solidarity within the community.⁴⁹ Through lament, a hospitable community contributes to fostering healing by respecting and listening to the life experiences of all, including those who are marginalized, by giving them the assurance that the voices of suffering will be heard and accepted.⁵⁰ "Healing...is likely to come socially (as the lamenter's isolation and sense of shame is removed). Moreover, there is also the possibility of spiritual healing of being given a new vision of one's past and present as one brings one's pain to God."⁵¹ In particular, practicing lament as a ritual in a faith community can be a community healing process by showing that our suffering is God's suffering and that our sorrow is a part of God's sorrow, and experiencing the hospitality of Christ who welcomes us just as we are, including our wounds.⁵² Lament is not the end, but a way to create space to open opportunities for hope and healing in all their complexity.⁵³

2. An Attitude of Lament

According to Jacques Derrida's concept of mourning, when a loved one dies, we internalize that person's image or ideal and make it a part of us. When this work is completed, the object we love is absent, leaving only our memories. The memory of complete loss of otherness is what Derrida calls "possible mourning." However, Derrida presents the concept of

⁴³ Ibid., 186.

⁴⁴ Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 128.

⁴⁵ Eliana Ah Rum Ku, "Preaching Lament as Transitional Space from Suffering to Hope: A Study on the Need for Communal Lament," PhD Diss., (Emmanuel College and the University of Toronto, 2022), 3.

⁴⁶ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 95.

⁴⁷ Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 72-73.

⁴⁸ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truth*, 190.

⁴⁹ June F. Dickie, "Lament as a Contributor to the Healing of Trauma: An Application of Poetry in the Form of Biblical Lament," *Pastoral Psychol* 68 (2019): 146.

⁵⁰ Philippe Denis, "Storytelling and Healing," in *A Journey Towards Healing: Stories of People with Multiple Woundedness in Kwazulu-Natal*, eds. P. Denis, S. Houser, and R. Ntsimane (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2011), 11.

⁵¹ Dickie, "Lament as a Contributor to the Healing of Trauma," 154.

⁵² Kirk-Duggan, "Lament as Womanist Healing," 154.

⁵³ Ibid.

“impossible mourning” that has a “tender rejection” for continuing to communicate and interact with the memory of the other while maintaining the other's otherness. And where faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead.... an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, out-side, over there, in his death, outside of us.⁵⁴

Derrida's mourning—in the decision to accept and not to accept others—provides important insight into dealing with the wounded community. Even if members of a community have been through the same history or suffered the same pain, individual members may not dare to accept others' pain as their own in order to respect the interpretation and experience of pain that varies depending on each other's personal life position, social location, and perspective. At the same time, to hear the diverse voices of others from different perspectives and backgrounds, people hold the voices and pains of others in their hearts. This double-bind lament creates an opportunity for individuals in a community to enter into caring and sincerely hospitable conversations.

3. Lament as a Way of Living Together

Namsoon Kang attaches great importance to Derrida's declaration of “I mourn therefore I am,” which adds the dimension of “being together” to the Cartesian understanding of humans as *cogito, ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”), as thinking subjects. This is because Derrida's declaration opens up a dimension of understanding that man is not only a subject of thought, but also “the subject[s] of co-existence.”⁵⁵ This connection is more about looking at the dark and painful parts of human beings rather than the romantic parts. Lament as a way of participating in this existential pain is a reflection of what each person can do in the context of living. Kang, according to Derrida's understanding of mourning, mentions that living in a multi-layered sense means not only expressing grief but also living in ways that bear the responsibility of others' lives.⁵⁶ Derrida's “I mourn therefore I am” means that mourning not only begins as soon as relationships with others is formed, but it also means that mourning begins with the beginning of life.⁵⁷ Living together is inseparable from compassion, which means “suffering together,” and lament which reveals the pain of loss. Mourning is not a nostalgia for a lost being but a constant and fundamental form of our lives.⁵⁸

The notion of lament as a way of living together is well revealed in African American experience. African American women's understanding of hospitality shows that lament is an effort by which the excluded are respected for their language and identity and give each other their places rather than being controlled by power. It has to do with acknowledging each other's vulnerabilities, listening carefully to each other's brokenness, and seeking a respectful and loving relationship. N. Lynne Westfield understands the concept of hospitality as a basic practice of resilience for African American women who have been excluded from society.⁵⁹ Black women

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Memories for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), 35.

⁵⁵ Namsoon Kang, “Between Sincere Lament and Dangerous Lament,” accessed November 5, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/kangnamsoon?fref=nf>.

⁵⁶ Kang, *Dating Derrida*, 28.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Points...: Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 321.

⁵⁸ Michael Nass, “When It Comes to Mourning,” In *Jacques Derrida Key Concepts*, ed. Claire Colebrook (New York: Routledge, 2014), 113.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

do not deny problems in their lives, but neither do they let their despair shape their lives. Black women have created places to speak with their rejected, distorted, denounced, and denied wounded voices.⁶⁰ As an example, Westfield introduces a concealed gathering. This gathering was a place to speak out and lament the forbidden truth in front of white and black men. For African American women and their gathering, to pursue resilience, hospitality includes lament as an act of liberty and a gesture of resistance.⁶¹ Lament secures this place and eventually invites women to participate in each other's mourning. In the cultural and religious experience of suffering, lament is "a requisite act in the moving toward prayer for restoration—for relationships, the faith community, and self."⁶² In addition, because lament opens a transformed view of the world and the self, it allows a new way of looking at the individual self in a beautiful, complex, and positive way without the unification of an individual and the group.⁶³

In this regard, lament has the power to open up one's own story and open space to listen to others. Lament is a way of being loved and respected and a way of walking together while accepting others' experiences and histories as they are. Since lament has been used as a way of expressing and respecting one's own thoughts, inter-confession, and mutual inspiration, it not only creates a space for hospitality to sprout, but also encourages the energy to keep it going. Thus, dare I say that *lament itself can be a form of hospitality as well as the precondition for hospitality in relation to the discourse of the excluded.*

Preaching with Lament to Encourage Hospitality

Although experiences and voices within a community may be varied, transitory, and imperfectly expressed, considering hospitality in relation to the diversity and singularity of each preacher may contribute to consideration of the role of preaching as a response to the brokenness, hatred, distancing, and differentiating that are prevalent in the world. Preaching that embraces lament in a wounded community may open the way for further insight into how to build a community while embracing 'difference.' This is because those who provide hospitality can be a key to healing hatred and isolation as they embrace the context of 'difference.'

In homiletics, hospitality is a relatively underdeveloped subject, especially as a practice for dealing with those who have been excluded from discourses on gender, race, class, politics, economics, religion, and power. Scholars such as Christine Smith, Lucy Rose, John McClure, Ronald Allen, James R. Nieman, Thomas G. Rogers, Eunjoo Mary Kim, and HyeRan Kim-Cragg have tried to listen to the excluded and to respect their life experiences. These scholars have made efforts toward valuing the instability of the preacher's authority to meet the marginalized within the main discourse of a sermon.⁶⁴ Some discourses related to hospitality in

⁶⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

⁶² Ibid., 139.

⁶³ Martha R. Fowlkes, "The Morality of Loss—The Social Construction of Mourning and Melancholia," *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 27 (1991): 529.

⁶⁴ Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Ronald Allen, *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insight* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2014); John McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001); John McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership & Preaching Meet* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995); James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001); Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); HyeRan Kim-

homiletics have been linked to ethical notions and social justice, contributing to an appreciation for diverse and ethically challenging sermons. Nonetheless, the hatred, distancing, and differentiating we face today call for a more multifaceted study of hospitality in preaching, including a diversity of hermeneutic eyes on the Bible and understanding the diverse images of God. By bringing diverse voices that have been ignored or marginalized into a pulpit as an expression of the gospel, a hermeneutic of lament can open the way to practicing hospitality for interpreting and reading biblical texts in diverse ways.

1. A Hermeneutic of Lament for Hospitality

A hermeneutic of lament is interested in bringing the voices that have been muted into sermons as they, too, contribute to the language of faith, hoping to foster a common dialogue with voices that have previously been raised or have started to emerge through fervent expression, testimony, and the protests raised by those voices. Lament involves exposing not only personal suffering, but also social trauma and the hidden narratives that cause it. Radical imagination can reveal the violence and fear experienced by the excluded.⁶⁵ The eyes of lament may work as “the necessary barb acting against the temptation to minimize or ignore repressive and destructive violence.”⁶⁶ The narratives of suffering from diverse sources of oppression keep a community open and permeable to the emotional experiences associated with the suffering of others.⁶⁷ Eventually, exposure to the laments of a wide range of voices contributes to forming hospitality in a wounded community.

The narrative of Jael (Judges 4:17-24) has been controversial. Jael is the wife of Heber, the Kenite, and she is the one who killed Sisera, the commander, when King Jabin's army invaded Israel. Jael sometimes is viewed as a woman violating the tradition of hospitality by deceiving her guest.⁶⁸ Although interpretations of this text have been concerned with whether Sisera is sexually engaged (cf. 5:27), and Jael's violence has been read in a variety of ways, examinations of this text from Jael's point of view are rare.⁶⁹ If we look at the text and enter into lament for Jael, we can feel the woman's fear, intimidation, and the urgency of her situation. These do not justify her act of murder but stir thoughts about the unjust demands that many women and powerless people may face today and their anxiety about what they have gone through.

As the story unfolds, Sisera, who had lost the war and fled, comes to Jael's tent because there was a treaty between her master, Jabin, king of Canaan, and Heber, the husband of Jael. (4:17) Sisera considered Jael's tent to be a safe place where he would be treated with hospitality. Jael gives Sisera a blanket under which to hide and Sisera asks for water and for her to report

Cragg, “Home, Hospitality, and Preaching” in *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Hospitality, Agency and Vulnerability*, eds. Andrea Bieler, et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019).

⁶⁵ Eliana Ah-Rum Ku, “Lament as Resistance and Rage: An Asian Woman Immigrant's Reading of Psalm 137 in the Light of Anti-Asian Hate Crimes of North America,” *Asian American Theological Forum* 8, no. 1 (2021): 11.

⁶⁶ Erich Zenger, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 75.

⁶⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 244.

⁶⁸ Abraham Kuruvilla, *Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 74. Refer to Note #20.

⁶⁹ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “What Went on in Jael's Tent? The Collocation תכסהו בשמיכה in Judges 4,18,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 24, no. 1 (2010): 143–144; Colleen M. Conway, *Sex and Slaughter in the Tent of Jael: A Cultural History of a Biblical Story* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

untruthfully that there is no one hiding in her tent. Then suddenly, she kills Sisera. If we read this text only through Sisera's eyes, then Jael is a deceiver, traitor, and murderer, and God is the one who uses this woman. However, if we look at this text from Jael's eyes, we can see that Sisera is killed for his own fault and that Jael was enduring fear, urgency, and shame in the situation inside the tent: 1) In the patriarchal culture of that time, Sisera should not have gone to the tent of Jael, but rather to the tent of Heber. It was a problem for a grown man who is trained in military command as a general to visit a tent where a married woman was living. In fact, this can still be a problem today. 2) Sisera twice asks Jael for a favor, which is a direct violation of the law of hospitality. Since the laws of hospitality in the ancient Near East were closely linked to honor, a guest should not ask the host for anything. Asking for something suggests that the host has not done their best and that the guest is uncomfortable.⁷⁰ Jael provided two favors—gave him a drink and lied for him—and Sisera dishonored Jael and her house. 3) Asking the host to lie was not only an act of dishonor, but it also reflects a tacit acknowledgement that Sisera could endanger Jael and her house. In other words, Sisera had informed Jael through his requests that entering Jael's tent was a reason that Jael and her house could be attacked by others.⁷¹ Therefore, Sisera was seriously attacking the honor of Jael and her house, including the honor of Heber, and thus threatening the safety of his hosts.

In this situation, Jael must have felt fear, conflict, threat, anxiety, and shame. The threat that Jael would have felt would be doubled if the commander of the army, who at the time regarded women as loot, came to the tent where women were alone (cf. 5:30). Although it was not intentional to go to Jael's tent instead of Heber's tent, it can be thought of as an habitual action of those who make violence and power their chosen way of life. Those in power who easily show off their power often do not hesitate to commit evil as a way of controlling the underdog; they don't care how much the powerless suffer because of their actions. Intentionally or not, Sisera breaks all the laws of hospitality and acts rudely to a woman who was powerless by the standards of her time and culture. Thus, Jael's actions are those of a woman acting to protect herself and her house against Sisera's evil and injustices. Jael has a sensibility to evil. Her story makes us reflect on the potential for misunderstanding, isolation, and scapegoating imposed on marginalized and neglected voices when patriarchal understandings and practices of hospitality are imposed on others. This perspective of lament on behalf of Jael allows for rethinking her fear, anxiety, and shame. It does not assert that God uses any means for the sake of God's own ends but that God uses a person who has a sensitivity to evil and acts for justice. Ultimately, the evil man perishes because of his own evil. This perception of hospitality welcomes the stories of various people in language that is akin to the gospel. It shares and suffers alongside the lives, experiences, beliefs, pains, and doubts of various people. Thus, hospitality with lament envisions that all the narratives of those who on their own are hurt by being unheard are important. It is a way of having dialectically constant interrelationships with other narratives by encouraging and engaging participants in action.

2. Lament as Hypersensitivity to the Marginalized for Hospitality

Having sensitivity to experiences is not just about attaching importance to experience, it is about taking into account the diversity of experiences and listening in a new way to the voices that have been excluded and silenced. Alice Walker argues that experiences of pain and

⁷⁰ Victor H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73.

⁷¹ Han Joon Shin, "One Who Concludes," preached at Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church, July 12, 2020.

oppression can be a resource for a liberated vision and spiritual growth and that the voices of “poor colored women” can make a difference.⁷² This is done from a sincere engagement in the “difference” that begins with listening seriously to the experiences of others. Lucy Rose suggests conversational preaching. Conversational sermons enjoy partnership in conversation and hospitality with the dining table community.⁷³ Building on the strong bonds, trust, and security of communities of faith, she stresses the importance of continuing dialogue with other members of the community of faith and with the marginalized, the broken, the silent and the shunned.⁷⁴ In her sermons she emphasized personal engagement, including participation in the testimony of the voices of those who have been excluded and silenced.⁷⁵ Rose says that when personal experiences are acknowledged and encouraged, worshipers begin to risk hearing and articulating the echoes and even memories of abuse and pain deep within their hearts.⁷⁶

Despite recognizing that the center of hospitality is God and that partnerships are essential, preachers may too easily become attached to power when acting as a host and speaking on behalf of subjects in the conversation. For example, preachers may have a great influence on those whose experiences will be included or whose voices will be allowed to join the conversation. Sometimes for preachers the pain of the excluded can result in an uncomfortable and complex discourse. This can make it tempting to consider these experiences exclusively, or to ignore, or bypass them. It is also not easy for the participants who have trauma to open up their suffering in public. Moreover, it is important to recognize that even a well-meaning attempt for community solidarity can lead to taming and exclusion.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, participation in the dialogue is a task for the excluded to find their own subjectivity out of the dominant voice’s control, an opportunity for other participants to critically examine their egos and listen to and respond to their partners, and an opportunity for preachers to have an encounter with the excluded in the conversation of preaching in a way that does not deny the importance of individual selves and the experiences of the excluded. Participants of the conversation, including the preacher, need to accept their limitations of not being able to fully understand others, signaling that individuals’ thoughts and feelings are important and will be considered important.⁷⁸ Also, it needs to be borne in mind that the way in which the experience of any particular person is considered within an ethical subject may not be determined by the preacher.⁷⁹ As McClure says, it is also necessary to remind preachers that alternative directions of thinking may exist, even if they need to limit the scope of their preaching.⁸⁰ This attitude on the part of the interlocutors is an important basis for continuing to listen to and to tell the truth.

It is clearly difficult and complex to consistently include the excluded in sermons. However, preachers need to be encouraged by themselves not to give up on this struggle because “glimpses of truth occur where they are least expected, where one’s own relativity is acknowledged in the midst of brokenness, in the lives of actual communities.”⁸¹

⁷² Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 187.

⁷³ Rose, 121.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁷ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 111.

⁷⁸ McClure, *Ethical Approaches to Preaching*, 92.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 115.

Being Called to Continuous Struggle for Hospitality

Practicing hospitality in preaching needs to be based on community consensus. It is not enough for an individual preacher to draw the experiences of the excluded into the dialogue of the sermon. This is because the voices of the excluded who are unilaterally heard without community awareness and consent remain as guests according to the power structure, making it difficult for them to have agency. Conversely, rather than unconditionally giving priority to only the voices of the excluded or forming a dominant voice with the excluded, all sermon participants can participate in the dynamics of dialogue while respecting each other with partnership based on co-hostship and co-guestship. By reflecting together and critically analyzing their experiences of difference and encouraging biblical and theological discussions related to a particular topic, the entire community can contribute to community healing and well-being.⁸²

The World Council of Churches equates the extent to which the church practices radical hospitality to the marginalized of society with evidence of its commitment to embodying the values of God's rule (Isa 58:6).⁸³ This commitment does not limit itself to liberating others who are oppressed, but rather liberating oneself from the imaginary isolation of an already orthodox or mainstream view.⁸⁴ The community listens to each other's fears, losses, hopes, needs, and anger through lament in preaching, in order to develop individuals' self-understanding, to acknowledge the worldview of their community partners, to acknowledge their power, and to acknowledge their powerlessness. It is to invite acknowledgment of the full humanity of their partners. It goes beyond egocentric needs and desires and opens up the potential to respect and care for others and the world.⁸⁵ Therefore, faith communities and their preachers have a responsibility to recognize and participate in spaces where we can all experience living 'together' without compromising the existential value of 'I.' Through this challenging and arduous process, preachers and congregations give up being self-centered and open themselves up to partners for true-hearted hospitality. Where the hearts and eyes of preachers are focused on hospitality in times of hatred and distancing, hospitality makes a place for a wounded community to rebuild itself into a deeper, more interconnected community.

⁸² Russell, *Just Hospitality*, 32.

⁸³ Jooseop Keum ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 18, no. 47.

⁸⁴ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 121.

⁸⁵ Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 282.