

17th October 2023

Sorrow

"Lament – a cry to a silent God."

Stan Grant, *Oration, Deakin University, 2023*

Stan Grant is a an Australian, "a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man". He is a distinguished journalist, author, and one of Australia's most influential public intellectuals. He has recently been appointed as Vice Chancellor's Chair of Australian-Indigenous Belonging at Charles Sturt University (in New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria). In the 2023 Deakin University Indigenous Oration, he said this:

Lament [is] a cry to a silent God. An absent God. A God who does not hear our prayers. And if God does, then God does not answer. The God who makes us wait. Who waits for us – at least, we hope ... Lament is described in Paul's Letter to the Romans as "sighs too deep for words" (8:26). I know that sigh. ... I know lament. "Lament" ... is a word that has fallen from favour. We speak of reconciliation, of rights, of justice. Sometimes we speak of healing, or even of truth. But these words fall short for me. They are too convenient ... designed to convince ... to measure ourselves by ... I am a person of faith. I am a person of belonging ... And I am a person of sorrow. Lament is a place of deep sorrow. It is a place of cries. But there is ... something sacred about sorrow. It is the way we reach towards God. But we have lost the words of lament, haven't we? ... So here I want to speak the unfashionable language of lament and try to reclaim these and other words that have passed out of circulation or have lost their true meaning.

This was brought to my attention following my pieces about wordless prayers and lamentation in recent days. I need make no further comment. Stan Grant shares insights more clearly than I can. For, like him, I too, am a person of sorrow – especially now – *and* a person of faith. Lament is a place of deep sorrow. But it is also a place of honesty. And, in truth, it is perhaps the place where we meet with God in the deepest way. And do we not need that now more than ever? So, as Stan Grant says, let's do our best to reclaim words, even unfashionable words, which speak of the depths of feelings that arise from our very soul. Let's not be afraid to put a name to sorrow, despair, mourning, grief, or pain.

A feeling of an absent God? "Sighs too deep for words"? Something sacred about sorrow? I've been there, and I know you have too.

A prayer for today

Lord, I wait, and wait, for something from you. Please come to me in my waiting. Amen

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