

LAMENT for a people with a dulled heart

Why do we listen and fail to hear?
Why do we see and not perceive?
We have turned away and our heart has grown dull
Heal us, help us to grieve
Heal us, help us to grieve

Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...
Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...

Why do we listen and fail to hear?
Why do we see and not perceive?
We have turned away and our heart has grown dull
Heal us, help us believe
Heal us, help us believe

Ooh... Ooh... Oh... Oh...
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Shawn Whelan
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This song draws from a few threads. Having been asked to write a song of lament for use in liturgies focusing on refugees, I thought about what we (mostly Anglo, mostly middle class) need to lament. One is our loss of lament itself. Another is our so-called “compassion fatigue,” which the bible rather less sympathetically calls “hardness of heart.” Then I came across Matthew 13:13ff, in which Jesus in turn cites the first of Isaiah’s hard words to the people with a dull (or “calloused”) heart, and this song was born. As it developed, I also found myself thinking about the notion of apocalyptic vision: the ability to see/hear what is really going on around us, AND what is breaking in with God.

Liturgists can of course use the song however they like. I have an idea that the song might work well following a story from an asylum seeker, and/or with images on screen that suggest situations of suffering (v.1) or hope (v.2).

Incidentally, I don’t think we have totally lost the genre of lament. A couple other great songs that came to mind while writing this are:

Sunday Bloody Sunday (U2)
Inspired by Love and Anger – first four verses (John Bell)
Were you there