

SAMPLE SERMON

in the style and font that will
be provided as an option for
someone to read aloud, if so desired.



“When Words Fall Short”

Scripture: Romans 8:26–27

The Reverend Deborah Fae Swift. M.Div., M.A., PC(USA)

Sometimes...

we simply don't know what to say.

We reach the edge of our own language...
and silence takes over.

We've all been there.

At a hospital bedside...
trying to comfort someone we love...
and realizing that every word feels too small.

At a graveside...
where the ache is too deep to name.

Or even in those long nights...
when we stare at the ceiling
and whisper—
“God... are you even there?”

We fumble for words—
some comfort, some prayer—
and nothing feels right.

Paul knew that place.
He called it the groaning of the Spirit.

He said, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness...
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,
but that very Spirit intercedes for us
with sighs too deep for words.”

Sighs too deep for words.

Not loud declarations.

Not polished prayers.

Just the sound of breath...

the sound of life...

moving through us.

It’s as if the Spirit breathes through our lungs

when our own breath is too heavy.

When the only sound we can manage...

is a sigh.

And that sigh—

that exhale—

is prayer.

You see, prayer isn’t always what we *say*.

Sometimes it’s what we *feel*.

Sometimes it’s what we *can’t* say.

It’s the tear that slips down a cheek.

It’s the silence that follows hard news.

It’s the weight we carry for someone we love.

And somehow—mysteriously, mercifully—

the Spirit translates it all.

Paul says that God searches the heart.

Not the mouth.

Not the mind.

The *heart*.

That means God already knows
what we're trying to say
before we say it.

When all we have is a sigh,
God hears the story inside it.

When all we have is a tear,
God reads the whole prayer written in salt.

When all we have is silence,
God still listens.

So maybe prayer isn't about getting the words right.
Maybe it's about getting the *presence* right.

Not perfection...
but participation.
Not eloquence...
but openness.

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There's a story I love about a little boy
who sat in the back of his church every Sunday.
He didn't know the words to the prayers.
Didn't know the hymns either.
But every week he'd fold his hands and quietly say:
A, B, C, D... all the way to Z.

When someone finally asked him what he was doing,
he said,
"I'm giving God all the letters.
God can make the words."

That's what Paul is talking about.

The Spirit takes the jumble of our hearts—
the alphabet of our longing—
and makes it into prayer.

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Sometimes those prayers are for healing.
Sometimes for strength.
Sometimes for the courage just to keep going.

And sometimes the prayer is wordless gratitude...
a deep breath of joy that we made it through another day.

Whatever form it takes,
Spirit meets us there—
in the middle of the real.

You might be praying while you drive...
or while you do the dishes...
or while you're sitting quietly,
thinking about someone you miss.

And you may not even realize
that you're praying.

But heaven does.

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One of my mentors used to say:
"God's favorite prayer is the one that starts with a sigh."

Because a sigh means you're still alive.
Still reaching.
Still trusting that something...
or Someone...
is listening.

Think of all the sighs that rise in our world.
The sighs of creation—
the forests burning...
the oceans groaning under the weight of plastic...
the animals losing their homes.

The sighs of humanity—
mothers who can't feed their children,
refugees walking miles for safety,
families grieving yet another act of violence.

And the sighs right here among us—
the private ones that no one sees.
The fear,
the loneliness,
the fatigue of trying to hold it all together.

Every one of those sighs
is heard by God.
Every one is holy.

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The Spirit, Paul says,
“intercedes for us according to the will of God.”
That means the Spirit doesn't just listen—
the Spirit *acts*.

The Spirit moves in ways we cannot see...
nudges us toward healing...
places people in our path...
gives us words for someone else's pain
right when they need them.

The Spirit is always translating.
Always connecting.
Always weaving the threads of our sighs
into something that holds.

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So...
if your prayers feel dry today—
if you don't know what to say—
if you've been holding something

too deep for language...
you are in holy company.

You don't have to be strong for God.
You don't have to come with the right theology
or the right emotion.

Sometimes the holiest prayer is this:
(pause)

"Here I am, God."

That's all.

Here I am.

Breathing.

Listening.

Trusting that you know what I mean
even when I don't.

And God does.

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So take a deep breath.

Let it out slowly.

That's Spirit breathing with you.

That's prayer in motion.

Your sigh becomes sacred.

Your silence becomes song.

Your heart becomes the altar
where the Spirit prays.

Amen.