

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary Jeremiah 8:18–9:1 • Jeremiah Laments over Judah

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Jeremiah 8:18–9:1

Lament over Judah

Psalms 79:1–9

Lament over Jerusalem

Overview

Life is not all sweetness and light! Often we are sad, in pain, crying. Children know what it is like to feel sad and hurt. Today we have an opportunity to talk with them about these sad and painful times. We can let them know that the Lord is always with us in our times of sorrow. Sometimes, if we start thinking less about ourselves and more about other people, we will stop being so sad. Other times, there are things that are very wrong around us, which need to be changed.

Key Points

- The Lord knows what it is like to feel pain, and is with us when we are hurt and sad.
- If we are just feeling sorry for ourselves, then we need to change the way we think and feel.
- If something is really wrong, it is good to be sad—especially if it leads us to try to make things better.

Example for Teaching Children

How many of you cry sometimes? Raise your hands. I'm putting up my hand, because I cry, too. Sometimes I'm so sad that all I feel like doing is crying.

What makes you cry? (*Allow time for sharing; offer your own ideas if needed start them talking.*) Sometimes we get hurt; sometimes we are scared; sometimes we are lonely and feel left out. There are lots of things that make us sad enough to cry.

Sometimes we have no good reason to cry. Maybe we want to stay up past our bedtime, but our parents won't let us. If we are just feeling sorry for ourselves, we need to stop thinking only about ourselves and what's happening right now, and try to understand *why* our parents want us to go to bed.

Other times there is a good reason to be sad. Today, our Bible reading is a sad one from the book of Jeremiah. Some people call Jeremiah "the weeping prophet" because he wrote about a lot of terribly painful and sad things.

Jeremiah had two big things to be sad about. One was that he knew his country would be conquered by Babylon, a great and powerful empire, and his people taken captive. Imagine what it would be like to have soldiers come and take you and your family far away

from home to a place where you couldn't even speak the people's language. That would be terrible!

But there was something that made Jeremiah even sadder. Can you guess what it was? No matter how much he tried to tell his people to listen to God, and to be loving and honest with each other, they kept being dishonest and mean. Jeremiah was very sad because he knew how unhappy this made people.

But even though Jeremiah was so sad about this, he also knew that the Lord cared about him and his people. He knew that the Lord was still there with them, trying to help his people to live better lives.

And we know this, too. No matter how sad we are, the Lord is always with us, comforting us, and helping us do what it takes to overcome our sadness.

Basic Correspondences

tears = grief due to false ideas

balm, balsam = true ideas from goodness

Gilead = the beginning of goodness

physician = one who saves from evil

healing = regaining our spiritual life

Thoughts from Swedenborg

"Shedding tears" and "weeping" express grief due to false ideas. But "shedding tears" refers to grief in our mind, and "weeping" to grief in our heart due to false ideas. Grief in our mind is grief in our thinking and understanding; grief in our heart is grief in our feelings and our intentions, which relate to goodness. . . . When we weep and shed tears, water that is bitter and acrid comes out. This happens because of an inflow into our grief from the spiritual world, where bitter water corresponds to a lack of truth due to false thinking, and to the grief that comes from this. So those who have true ideas grieve because of false ways of thinking. *Apocalypse Explained #484.3*

"A physician" means one who saves us from evil and false things, since "the healthy" means people who live good lives, while "the sick" means people who live bad lives. *Arcana Coelestia #6502.3*

Since Gilead was a boundary, in the spiritual meaning it symbolized the beginning of goodness, which relates to our physical senses. For when we are being spiritually reborn, we are first led into the joys of our physical senses. *Arcana Coelestia #4117.3*