

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary Lamentations 1:1–6 • Lamentation and Comfort

Prepared by the Rev. Lee Woofenden

Lamentations 1:1–6 The lonely city
or Psalm 137:1–6 Weeping in Babylon
Lamentations 3:19–26 . . . The Lord’s great love

Overview

This lesson calls for two readings, with a choice for the first. Together, they present a contrast between struggle and sorrow on the one hand, and comfort and joy on the other. As we continue to explore these themes through the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, our particular focus today is on helping the children to understand where struggle and sorrow come from, and the path toward true comfort and joy.

Key Points

- We are in spiritual captivity when we want to be good and kind, but our bad habits prevent us.
- It takes a struggle and a fight inside of ourselves to break out of this kind of captivity.
- The Lord will help us in this struggle, and in the end will bring us comfort and even joy.

Example for Teaching Children

Have you ever been trapped somewhere and couldn’t get out? (*Let them tell the story. If nobody can think of one, tell them a story about a person who got trapped, and someone helped them to get out.*) What did it feel like? (*Pause*) It can be very scary and sad!

In our lessons so far, we have learned about how Jeremiah warned his people to change the way they were living, or they would be taken captive by Babylon. In today’s story they *have* been taken captive—and they probably felt a lot like you (*or the person in the story*) did when you were trapped. They were not allowed to go back to their homes and their land.

There is another way we can be trapped. All of you want to be good to people and make them happy, right? (*Pause*) But sometimes we do things that hurt other people and ourselves. When we keep doing something bad over and over again, it’s called a “bad habit.” Bad habits are really hard to stop—even when we want to! (*Older classes can discuss addiction.*) When we have to struggle against our bad habits, it is like being held captive and trying to get free. It hurts, and it makes us very sad.

When you were trapped, how did you get out? Did you struggle and fight? Did someone help you?

(*Pause*) When we try to break a bad habit—like lying or hitting—we have to struggle to make ourselves stop doing these things. But other people can help us. They can remind us when we’re “doing it again” so that we will remember that we wanted to stop.

The Lord is also there for us. If we are about to do something wrong, one of the best ways to stop is to say a prayer to the Lord asking for help.

God loves it when we decide to break our bad habits. And God has arranged it so that once we have struggled against a bad habit and stopped doing it with God’s help, we get a feeling of real happiness and joy. We have been freed from captivity!

Basic Correspondences

- captivity = being prevented from living kindly
- gall = truth mixed with falsity from evil
- widow = goodness without truth, or vice versa
- music = joy that comes from love
- Jerusalem = the Lord’s church within us

Thoughts from Swedenborg

We are in spiritual captivity when the Lord keeps us inwardly in goodness and truth, but hell keeps us outwardly in evil and falsity. From this, there is conflict between our outer and inner selves. . . . When this happens we are held like captives, since we want to be guided by the truth that flows in from the Lord, but the things that flow in from hell make us believe we are incapable of it. This conflict happens so that our outer self may be brought under the control of our inner self, and material things may serve spiritual things in us. *Arcana Coelestia* #7990

When our grief ends after we have borne temptations, there follows a joy that comes from goodness through truth. All the joy of the angels comes from goodness through truth, or from a spiritual love for truth. . . . This is because divine truth flowing out from the Lord is what forms heaven—both overall and in detail. When we are involved in divine truth, we are involved in the life of heaven, and from this we have eternal joy. *Apocalypse Explained* #484

Musical instruments and dancing symbolize the varieties of joy and gladness that well up from our loves, as well as the loves themselves in our minds—which the melodies stir up. *Apocalypse Explained* #323c.11