

## *When There Is No Way Out*

Sunday School Lesson

Lamentations 4:3-5, 14-19, 21-22; Psalm 56

March 15, 2026

These verses from Lamentations are difficult to read. I heard some might be avoiding Sunday School because they do not enjoy these lessons. But famine is real and it is still being experienced in part of the world today. This is from a November United Nations report:

*There's enough food to feed everyone on the planet.*

*But 673 million people are going hungry every day – that's 8% of the global population.*

*Poverty, conflict and the climate crisis are keeping life-giving food out of reach.*

*The UN Hunger Report defines hunger as populations who are experiencing severe food insecurity. That means when people can't get a steady, daily supply of safe and nutritious food to live an active and healthy life.*

### **Key world hunger statistics**

- *2.6 billion people can't afford a healthy diet – that's about 32% of the global population.*
- *Globally, one in twelve people go to bed hungry every night*
- *673 million people in the world are undernourished*

### **Conflict is the biggest cause of hunger globally**

*War, conflict and armed violence is the biggest causes of hunger in the world today.*

*War disrupts people growing and exporting crops all over the world, which is increasing food shortages in regions directly impacted by the violence and beyond.*

*85% of people facing hunger crises live in conflict-affected countries. Armed violence often leads to infrastructure destruction, with food markets, farmland and supply chains being destroyed.*

The latest UN report has declared the countries with the worst hunger in the world as:

- Sudan
- Occupied Palestinian Territories
- Afghanistan
- Yemen
- South Sudan
- Haiti
- Mali

**Purpose Statement: To explore how the depths of desperation impact both our faith and our service.**

### **History**

During the late 7th century BC, Judah became a vassal kingdom of Babylon. In 601 BC, Jehoiakim, king of Judah, revolted against Babylonian rule despite the strong remonstrances of the prophet Jeremiah. Jehoiakim died for reasons unclear, and was succeeded by his son, Jeconiah. In 597 BC, the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, and the city surrendered. Nebuchadnezzar pillaged Jerusalem and deported Jeconiah and

other prominent citizens to Babylon; Jeconiah's uncle, Zedekiah, was installed as king. Later, encouraged by the Egyptians, Zedekiah launched a second revolt, and a Babylonian army was sent to retake Jerusalem.

On Tisha B'Av, July 587 or 586 BC, the Babylonians took Jerusalem, destroyed the First Temple and burned down the city. The small settlements surrounding the city, and those close to the western border of the kingdom, were destroyed as well. According to the Bible, Zedekiah attempted to escape, but was captured near Jericho. He was forced to watch the execution of his sons in Riblah, and his eyes were then put out.

The Babylonian siege caused catastrophic conditions inside Jerusalem. The city, surrounded and cut off from external resources, suffered from severe famine. Biblical accounts describe extreme deprivation, with residents facing hunger and disease. Many citizens attempted to flee to neighboring territories, including Moab, Ammon, and Edom, to escape the dire circumstances. The Babylonians employed a strategy of encirclement, systematically cutting off supplies and weakening the city's defenses. The protracted siege took a significant toll on Jerusalem's population and infrastructure, leaving the city vulnerable to attack.

The difficulty I have in reading Lamentations is that all the blame has been put on God when we know that this was the result of the actions of the people and the leaders of Judah. They did this to themselves. The ones attacking them are the Babylonians, not God. No one wants to admit this. The unfortunate aspect of this is that the people suffering were not the people who led them into this mess. It was the previous generations of leaders that had continually preferred the ritual of religion over genuine faith in God. This pattern often repeats itself in both large and small ways. We as a nation often suffer for the missteps of previous generations. Churches often decline due to decisions made twenty or more years ago. CEOs and boards make terrible decisions and it ends up punishing the worker at the bottom of the food chain.

Psalm 56 is the psalm for those who feel as if they are under attack. It is a psalm for those who are desperate and those who are fearful for their future. Verse eight gives reference to the ancient practice of tear catchers where those in grief or in joy captured their tears in small vases. Our lesson calls this psalm an *Anchor of Hope* that is available to us who trust God in all circumstances. Things may not be going our way but God is still with us. God is for us even when the world is reigning terror down on us. Choosing to live our lives by following Jesus does not make us immune from the harsh realities of this world. There will still be wars. There will still be illness. There will still be injustice. There will still be pain and loss. But we know that is not the end of the story – we have hope even when everything is falling apart around us.

Let us pray:

**O Merciful God, we know you love us but there are times when our worlds are crushed and we feel abandoned. Thank you for giving us the space to cry out. Thank you for giving us the time needed before we are ready to face your truth. Lead us to hope by remembering you are with us always. Amen.**