

*Problems, Pleas, and Promises*  
Sunday School Lesson  
Lamentations 1:7-20  
February 22, 2026

Jerusalem remembers the day she lost everything,  
when her people fell into enemy hands, and not a soul there to help.  
Enemies looked on and laughed, laughed at her helpless silence.  
Jerusalem, who outsinned the whole world, is an outcast.  
All who admired her despise her now that they see beneath the surface.  
Miserable, she groans and turns away in shame.  
She played fast and loose with life, she never considered tomorrow,  
and now she's crashed royally, with no one to hold her hand:  
"Look at my pain, O God! And how the enemy cruelly struts."  
The enemy reached out to take all her favorite things. She watched  
as pagans barged into her Sanctuary, those very people for whom  
you posted orders: keep out: this assembly off-limits.  
All the people groaned, so desperate for food, so desperate to stay alive  
that they bartered their favorite things for a bit of breakfast:  
"O God, look at me! Worthless, cheap, abject!  
"And you passersby, look at me! Have you ever seen anything like this?  
Ever seen pain like my pain, seen what he did to me,  
what God did to me in his rage?  
"He struck me with lightning, skewered me from head to foot,  
then he set traps all around so I could hardly move.  
He left me with nothing—left me sick, and sick of living.  
"He wove my sins into a rope  
and harnessed me to captivity's yoke.  
I'm goaded by cruel taskmasters.  
"The Master piled up my best soldiers in a heap,  
then called in thugs to break their fine young necks.  
The Master crushed the life out of fair virgin Judah.  
"For all this I weep, weep buckets of tears,  
and not a soul within miles around cares for my soul.  
My children are wasted, my enemy got his way."  
Zion reached out for help, but no one helped.  
God ordered Jacob's enemies to surround him,  
and now no one wants anything to do with Jerusalem.  
"God has right on his side. I'm the one who did wrong.  
Listen everybody! Look at what I'm going through!  
My fair young women, my fine young men, all herded into exile!  
"I called to my friends; they betrayed me.  
My priests and my leaders only looked after themselves,  
trying but failing to save their own skins.  
"O God, look at the trouble I'm in! My stomach in knots,  
my heart wrecked by a life of rebellion.  
Massacres in the streets, starvation in the houses.  
Lamentations 1:7-20 *The Message* (interpreted by Eugene Peterson)

**Purpose Statement: To place our lamentations alongside God's forgiving restoration.**

This is a difficult passage to read because it tells the raw emotions of a defeated people who once were protected under the covenant they made with God. They wanted to do things their way so God let them and this was the result. What did Israel do that was so terrible? Did they stop making sacrifices or observing the rituals or attending the synagogue on the Sabbath? No. These were a very religious people. Read these verses from the first chapter of Isaiah:

*Why this frenzy of sacrifices?" God's asking.*

*"Don't you think I've had my fill of burnt sacrifices, rams and plump grain-fed calves?*

*Don't you think I've had my fill of blood from bulls, lambs, and goats?*

*When you come before me, whoever gave you the idea of acting like this,*

*Running here and there, doing this and that—all this sheer commotion in the place provided for worship?*

*"Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games:*

*Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings—*

*meetings, meetings, meetings—I can't stand one more!*

*Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out!*

*I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning.*

*When you put on your next prayer-performance, I'll be looking the other way.*

*No matter how long or loud or often you pray, I'll not be listening.*

So what is the problem? God had blessed Israel for Israel to be a blessing to all nations. Instead, Israel took their blessing and nationalized it. They took their blessing and used it for the powerful, the wealthy, and the influential. Greed was the most admired trait. They paid their tithe by exploiting the poor. They ignored the welfare of the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner that lived among them. God sent prophet after prophet but no one wanted to change. They wanted to make Israel great in the eyes of the world. Enemies began to arise and God promised miraculous defeats of those enemies if only they would change. The kings did not listen and they entered alliances that led to their utter destruction.

God put together laws and principles where people would thrive. There would be no generational poverty or generational wealth but history has shown us over and over that greed always gets in the way and for some to become extremely wealthy, others must labor without adequate wages or any wages at all. It is a pattern seen over and over in history and today. It ultimately leads to wars and rebellions and the whole process starts all over again. God cares about people. We were all created in the image of God. God wants us to care about people as well. This is my lament. Jesus came to build communities of faith, hope, love, service, and forgiveness and we take those communities and often create little empires. Let us strive to do things God's way this Lent.

Let us pray:

**God of Promise, come and restore me now as I begin my Lenten journey. Meet me at the cross renewed, refreshed, and ready to serve you; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**