

Sermon Title: **Fed with the Bread of Tears**

Text: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (Lectionary Psalter reading)

Calendar Date: November 30, 2014

Liturgical Date: First Sunday of Advent (season of expectation, hope, promise, salvation)

Historical Date: One day after the sesquicentennial of the Sand Creek Massacre

Key verse: *"You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure."* (Psalm 80:7)

### **Text Notes**

1. A communal lament – pain, sorrow, suffering, distress, and plea for restoration, *"a psalm of deep yearning"* (Feasting on the Word)
2. Vss. 2, 3, 7, 18, 19 – God is called to save, restore, revive God's people
3. Vss. 4-6 – God is the source of the people's pain and suffering

### **Theological perspective**

4. Sources of distress – God and enemies
5. Source of salvation – a theophany (3, 7, 19)

### **Pastoral Perspective**

6. Opposite of Psalm 23!
7. Vs. 1 – the Shepherd God is called to listen up! *"The people are in a world of hurt and want God to know about it."* (FOTW)
8. The people want God to do something!
9. Grief paralyzes us and may silence us or cause to cry out in pain
10. Psalm 80 is an incredible confession not of sin, but faith. It is a voice that is: communal, bold, liturgical, prophetic, and hopeful. (FOTW, p. 10)

### **Exegetical Perspective**

11. *"The complaint continues, conveying grief and suffering through the metaphor of food and drink consisting only of tears."* (FOTW, 13)
12. The God as shepherd metaphor lays the foundation for the messianic expectation that Jesus invokes. (FOTW, 13)

### **Homiletical Perspective**

13. Tension between 1-2 (theology) and 4-6 (experience)
14. This psalm recognizes that suffering and trouble are a mystery
15. OK to be angry with God, keep faith in suffering
16. How do we hope God will act?
17. Opening stanza calls God to do 4 things: give ear, shine forth, stir up might, and save. God has done these things in Jesus.

**Sermon Focus:** Coping with the grief of deep suffering

### **Reflections**

1. Sand Creek has been a source of deep pain, suffering and grief for 150 years
2. The story of the Sand Creek massacre has been under-told or miss-told for 150 years
3. Acknowledging, expressing, and sharing our pain, grief, tears, and suffering is healthy, needed, and overdue

## Illustrations

John Timmer, God of Weakness, p. 94

During the early period of the Reformation, when persecutions swept over large sections of Europe, Christians used to hide their Bibles in cavities of walls, being careful to cover them up with bricks and mortars. Centuries later, some of the Bibles were recovered. When experts examined them they made an amazing discovery. They found that the passages spelling our God's greatest promises were least legible.

What accounts for this? **The tears of the 16<sup>th</sup> century faithful, the persecuted, that had dropped on these passages.**

***"There are some things seen more clearly through tears than through dry eyes."***

Bill Eberwein quote (tweet received 4/28/14)

Ken Medema expresses the need of so many lost and hurting people in his song "If this Is Not a Place." He asks for a place where one can go when seeking answers and acceptance and when needing to speak and be heard. There aren't many places in the world that will accept all as they are, and few will listen. So many people need a place of friendship and love and security, but there aren't many opportunities for these. So where do we go for acceptance and love? Medema sings:

***If this is not a place where tears are understood, where can I go to cry?***

*If this is not a place where my spirit takes wings, where can I go to fly?*

The church is this place of love and growth and acceptance.

A friend of mine had a brain-damaged daughter. Sometimes the sadness she feels for her daughter's condition overwhelms her, as it did recently. She wrote me this letter and gave me permission to quote it: "I can hardly bear it sometimes. My most recent wave of grief came just last year before her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. As the day approached, I found myself brooding over all the things that she would never be able to do. What did I do? What I've learned to do again and again: I did what I believe is the only thing to conquer grief. And that is to embrace it...***I cried and cried and cried, and faced the truth of my grief head-on.***" People who face their feelings and express them freely begin the journey towards hope and healing.

***"I have been taught tears are the highest form of prayer."***

--Sand Creek descendant at 2014 RMC Community Dinner for Healing Relationships

***"Grieving is hard. Grieving as a public figure harder. Grieving while haters celebrate your pain, hardest."*** -- Facebook post by Saddleback Church Pastor Rick Warren a week after his 27-year-old son Matthew completed suicide in April 2013

***"What soap is to the body, tears are to the soul."*** -- Unknown

***"Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts."*** --Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

***“I’ll give you a glass of wine, if you give me a few drops of water from your eyes. I’m thirsty for your sadness.”*** -- Jarod Kintz, *This Book is Not for Sale*

***“The sins of the fathers visit the third and fourth generations.”*** -- Paraphrase of Exodus 20:5

***“For everything there is a season...a time to weep...a time to mourn”*** -- Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4-5

***“See, the home of God is among mortals.***

***He will dwell with them as their God;***

***they will be his peoples.***

***And God himself will be with them;***

***he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.***

***Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.”***

--Revelation 21:3-4

***“The tears of life belong to its interlude, not its finale.”*** --Unknown