

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The inspired word of God for our consideration this morning is found in Jeremiah 23:1-6.

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD. 3 "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 "I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD. 5 " Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 6 In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

I believe most people don't like being reliant upon another. This of course will vary to some degree but I believe it's a general truth. We like to have things done our way and according to our own timeline. But today the Lord again reminds us of no general truth but an absolute truth that **"The Lord is our righteousness."**

One of the reasons why the Lord is our righteousness is the fact that He Himself doesn't scatter or destroy the sheep of His pasture. **"But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase."** The desire of the Lord is that 1 Timothy 2:4 **"all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."** What a simple clear verse of God's holy word that is. Do we over look it? Have we memorized it so long ago that we forget how important that simple clear statement is not only for all of mankind, but for all of us.

If the Lord were like we are by nature we would end up having a God that deals with us like we would deal with others. Sometimes we might consider the welfare of mankind. Most of the time we might consider how certain groups of people are doing, hoping that they are well. Most of the time we would only regard those who are very close to us. And we always make sure that number one is taken care of, me.

When people claim that Jesus scatters and destroys it's because of their lack of understanding and faith. Romans 9:33 **"As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."** Mankind and its disbeliefs are the ones who make Jesus a stumbling stone and rock of offense. It happens for us from time to time in our weakness that we do the same thing. But the Lord doesn't have that attitude in Himself because the Lord is our righteousness. He humbled Himself for all mankind to the point of suffering death on the cross. He didn't regard our sinfulness as to whether or not He would come and love all of us by shedding His Holy blood for all of us. He was simply and willingly obedient to the desires of God the Father to have all men be saved from an eternity of suffering in hell.

Another reason why the Lord is our righteousness is because He is the righteousness of His shepherds whom He keeps from straying. **"I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.**"

The righteousness of the shepherd comes completely from the head shepherd. The actual right to preach comes from God. Our text says that God would setup shepherds who will feed the sheep. This responsibility is a great one indeed. Under the new covenant we have all been setup to preach to Gospel of Christ to the world. 1 Peter 2:9 **"But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."**

But an incredible responsibility comes along with being a shepherd. **"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD.**"

As stated earlier, the Lord Himself doesn't scatter nor destroy, but the shepherd certainly can. The thing that truly causes the shepherd to scatter and destroy the sheep is through false teaching. That is what the Lord said of the teachers in the days of Jeremiah. Jer. 5: 30-31 **"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their *own* power; and My people love *to have it so*. But what will you do in the end?"** The teachers throughout the Old Testament were often turning the people away from Jehovah and had them worship other gods.

Unfortunately shepherds of today teach falsely as well. Many churches who claim to be Christian or even Lutheran teach everything from: Scripture isn't inspired, the creation account was actually millions of years, the people in Scripture really never existed they were people made up to teach a moral truth, Jesus was just a man, He really didn't rise from the dead, baptism doesn't save the one receiving it from sin, the Lord's Supper is just bread and wine, Jesus really didn't mean that we should observe all things that Scripture teaches, mankind's opinion is more important and supersedes Scripture.

And our text reminds us of the importance of sound teaching when it says, "Woe to the shepherds." For me and any other pastor the only thing we can do is speak the truth in Christ. Anything else and we will scatter and destroy at least in a spiritual way. The condemnation for those who teach falsely, pastor or not, is one that is very real and severe. Mark 9:42 **"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."** All of this goes back to the desire of the Lord who is our righteousness to not have anyone be scattered or spiritually destroyed.

Now the reason the Lord can even be our righteousness is because He is qualified to be. **"Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth."**

Our text describes our Savior Jesus as being a branch in the line of David. When one considers this we might get confused as to what the picture is teaching us. The Hebrew term never makes reference to a twig or an individual branch of a tree. Instead it refers to a unique growth coming from the root of the tree.

To understand the difference is to understand why this picture shows us that the Lord is our righteousness. If Jesus were a branch coming directly from the trunk or existing branch the picture would be that He would've been born of two human parents.

Since He is the root it shows us a parallel to the wonderful way in which Jesus would be born from the line of David Isaiah 7:14 **"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."** Also Isaiah 11:10 **"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."**

Since the Lord, the Root of Jesse would come from the line of David in a very special way we know that the Lord is our righteousness because He didn't inherit the natural sin that all of mankind has from Adam and Eve. If Jesus was born from two human parents He could've never lived a perfect life for you because He would've carried natural sin with Him just like we do. If He were born of two human parents the death He died would've never paid for the sins of all mankind. That is why this branch, our Jesus is righteous.

And He is our King who reigns forever. By the perfect life and death of Jesus He was shown to have completed our salvation when the Father had Him take His rightful place at His right hand. Jesus is now executing judgment and righteousness on the earth in a very special way. Not by utterly destroying mankind because of our sin but declaring that all of you are righteous because of His righteousness. Giving to you the robe of righteousness that you received by faith in the shedding of His blood.

If there was ever a time or a situation in which we truly need to be dependent upon another it is in regards to our relationship with God. Thank God that by faith, through His Son, the Branch of Righteousness we have been declared righteous in the site of the Father. In whom we now reign because the Lord is our righteousness. Amen.