

## 06.28.26 ~ Pentecost 5

### “A Righteous Descendant”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

#### Words of Prophecy

**Jeremiah 23:1-8** <sup>NLT</sup>

Pew Bible 671

<sup>1</sup> “What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. <sup>3</sup> But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. <sup>4</sup> Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the Lord, have spoken!

<sup>5</sup> “For the time is coming,”  
says the Lord,

“when I will raise up a righteous descendant  
from King David’s line.

He will be a King who rules with wisdom.

He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

<sup>6</sup> And this will be his name:

‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.’

In that day Judah will be saved,  
and Israel will live in safety.

<sup>7</sup> “In that day,” says the Lord, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ <sup>8</sup> Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

**Leader: These Are God’s Words of Promise.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

#### Words of Instruction

**Romans 4:13, 16, 19-25** <sup>NLT</sup>

Pew Bible 980

<sup>13</sup> Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith . . .

<sup>16</sup> So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe . . .

<sup>19</sup> And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb.

<sup>20</sup> Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. <sup>21</sup> He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. <sup>22</sup> And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. <sup>23</sup> And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded <sup>24</sup> for our benefit, too, **assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** <sup>25</sup> He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

**Leader: These Are Apostle Paul's Words.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Righteous Lord, we worship you today preparing to celebrate our nation's 250-year history and founding. It brings to mind our forefathers who struggled to design a democracy and all those who have fought to defend it over the centuries. We thank you for that legacy. This week's festivities also remind us of the importance of religious liberty and soul freedom as Baptist doctrines and core beliefs. Help us to keep these in mind as we share our faith with others. Let us be forthright, fearless, and faithful as Christ taught, but also respectful and gracious. Teach us how to interpret Romans from this new lens of Roots, Branches, and Grafting. Help us to lean on your understanding rather than our own. Please speak through these Scriptures, this message, and messenger. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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The first Sunday of June, I selected a Jeremiah and Romans passage to introduce the concept of being grafted into the family of God. That message led to our current summer Bible Study of Paul's letter to the Romans as it connects to our theme of Roots and Branches. I had this glimmer of an idea, but each week as we study, I am discovering more that I did not know, remember, or understand from our Scriptures. Isn't that how your faith matures too? I encourage you to do your own parallel studies of each week's passages and their surrounding chapters to deepen your own Bible wisdom. You can go to our website under "Services" to find sermons and passages from earlier weeks if that helps you. God calls

each believer to engage with his Word in study and contemplation, not just for some pastor to tell you what to think about it!

So, let me remind you and summarize what was happening for Jeremiah before we continue. In 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was exiled to Assyria; that history and prophecy are found in Kings, Chronicles, Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah. About 120 years later, the southern kingdom of Judah was exiled to Babylon. Jeremiah wrote immediately before and during the exile of Judah (what some call the Southern Kingdom). That is our context for the first passage today. Judah turned to false gods and outside alliances for protection. Through Jeremiah's poetic prophecy, or a psalm of lament, God showed his anger, cursing these evil people for turning away from him. They believed human efforts and allies could rescue them rather than depend on their faith in God's provision and care. This angered God, and he warned them in Chapter 17 that they will become parched, withered, and unfruitful, as dead as the salt lands around the Dead Sea. Remember that phrase?

So then, as you keep reading in Jeremiah (there is much history of kings and territorial battles there), we learn in Chapter 20 that Jeremiah was punished for criticizing the leaders. He was placed in the stocks and wrote more laments, praying to God for redemption and strength. God answered his prayers with calling and recommitment to the work of prophecy. That is where we are today; Chapter 23's "shepherds" was a politically correct phrase referring to the unrighteous kings who scattered and destroyed God's sheep, Israel, and now Judah. Because of their evil ways, they deserve punishment. What was a leader supposed to do and be? According to Asbury Bible Commentary, "the essential quality of a

leader is his hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness for all and his particular care for the poor and the needy.” These kings were failing. Jeremiah worries though that if they are punished, who would care for the people? Who would have the resources? He is reassured that God would provide ways to gather the remnant of the dispersed people to bring them back. God himself would raise up new shepherds to tend to the people and a new king who would be a righteous branch of the Davidic line. In our hindsight, we know that king was to be Jesus! So, this is a Messianic reference to a new righteous descendant of Abraham and David (details are in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke). Jeremiah 23:7-8 prophecies double meaning that just as Moses rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh in Egypt, God will restore Judah homeward to its sacred lands through both righteous human and divine descendants and leadership. Such hope!

The Apostle Paul in Romans reminds his readers, specifically the Gentiles (or Greeks), that although they are not born descendants of Abraham as Jews, through this man, Jesus, who is a descendant of Abraham and David, they can be saved and considered God’s children. You see, we had to go back into Jeremiah (and even into Genesis for the Abraham material, if you are a really good student!) to understand what brought our own salvation forward. What came before in the Israelites’ heritage does make a difference but only to establish a human and divine connection between Abraham, David, and Jesus. If we have the belief in and received the grace of Jesus, we do not need that lineage, but many who do not have faith might need to understand this. Our discussion today may give you assurance or justification for belief in Christ even though you do not really need it.

Paul's Romans argument explains that if Jews could become heirs by obeying 613 laws, then faith has no value. So instead, the law has no value and if there is no law to follow, there is no sin. <sup>16</sup> So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's." There are many times in Abraham's life that he had only to rely on his faith and trust in God: the call to leave his homeland, the waiting of being childless, circumcision, and his obedience to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Paul gained strength by looking at Abraham's faith in the midst of many trials and likened it to Jesus' righteous faith in his father. I'll repeat part of today's Romans' passage:

<sup>22</sup> And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. <sup>23</sup> And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded <sup>24</sup> for our benefit, too, **assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** <sup>25</sup> He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

Paul argued that Abraham was justified by righteousness in his belief in God because of his right relationship with God. The same goes for us, and although we may not feel very righteous sometimes, especially during moments of impatience or road rage, if we surrender our lives to Jesus' leadership as God's direct divine Son and Abraham's justified descendant, then we will be gifted with grace and eternal life. Faith supersedes law. Yes, we try to obey, but we realize we are only human, and require the divine intervention, forgiveness, and redemption that Jesus gave for us on the cross. That status is holy and forever; we are asked to do our best to follow Christ and commissioned to share our faith

so that others are also forgiven and redeemed. By our faith in Christ, we are justified by both righteous descendants, no matter our earthly heritage. Our only two commandments from Matthew 22:36-40 are to love the Lord your God which includes Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and to love your neighbor. Verse 40 Good News Translation explains it best: “<sup>40</sup>The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.” Amen? Amen! ||

***Please pray with me:*** We thank you Jesus as we read your word today. Please help us to strengthen our faith when so much around us is in chaos. We trust that you will empower us to continue your work here on earth to grow the Kingdom of God. We trust in your righteous descendants’ faith to give us courage to carry on your work. Please forgive us when we slip or fail. We are glad you were present in our fellowship today and accept our gratitude for grafting your people in to produce the best fruit. May we be that fruit or at least be the branches that hold new fruit! Strengthen our resolve to follow your teachings, inviting others to love you as we do, and please keep us free in you as we celebrate our nation’s independence and religious liberty this week. We pray these things in Jesus’ name, Amen.