

“No Rest for the Wicked”

First Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Jeremiah prophesied before the exile in 587 BCE. In this passage, he uses the metaphor of a shepherd to describe the bad kings who have scattered the “flock” of Israel. God promises to gather the flock and to raise up a new king from David’s line to save Israel and Judah.

¹Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. ²Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord.

⁵The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Psalm: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. (Ps. 23:1)

¹The Lord^l is my shepherd;
I shall not ^l be in want.

²**The Lord makes me lie down ^l in green pastures
and leads me be- ^l side still waters.**

³You restore my ^l soul, O Lord,
and guide me along right pathways ^l for your name’s sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I
shall ^l fear no evil;**

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they ^l comfort me. R

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence ^l of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is ^l running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days ^l of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the ^l Lord forever. R**

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

The author of this letter reminds his audience that originally they were not part of God's chosen people. Through Jesus' death, however, they are included in God's household of faith, whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ.

¹¹Remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

When Jesus sends his disciples out to teach and heal, they minister among large numbers of people. Their work is motivated by Christ's desire to be among those in need.

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and

moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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We've all been there. We may be there right now.

Are we tired? Longing for rest? Or are we tired because of the limitations and restrictions, and we simply want to feel free to do and be as we used to, *before?*

Before Covid, before fires, before heat....

Even our plan to “play a little” and meet at Bertram Creek Park was changed...perhaps it is fine down by the lake, but perhaps not – it was pretty smoky when I went outdoors this morning....I can just seek the headlines: “Christ Lutheran Kelowna was able to keep its members safe through 15 months of pandemic, but after meeting at Bertram Creek Park, most ended up at KGH with smoke inhalation and heat exhaustion...”

There is an old greeting that comes to us from the Quaker tradition – “How art thou within thyself?” – in other words, not just the standard social “How are you?”, to which we automatically respond, “Fine”, even if we are very far from being fine, but a much deeper, probing, hopefully more caring question – “How *are* you – *really* – inside and outside?”

How art thou within thyself....? Let’s take a moment to do an internal inventory....*PAUSE*.... How art thou within thyself?

In our first reading, Jeremiah issues warnings to those who are charged with taking care of others not to abuse the trust placed in them by others – we think of last week’s Gospel about Herod, completely missing the point of all of his power, and allowing his ego to trap him in foolish vows, with the result that John the Baptist is executed.

Ironically, Jeremiah 23 finds its response in Psalm 23 – the age old words of comfort of the 23rd Psalm....

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want....

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall ¹ fear no evil; ² for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they ¹ comfort me. R

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence ¹ of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

*⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days ¹ of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the ¹ Lord forever. R*

Then, in our Gospel, Jesus is attuned to the exhaustion of the disciples, and tries to take them away for a timeout, a rest, a retreat. The people don't let them have much time – “no rest for the wicked and the righteous don't need none”, goes an old saying...

As Sundays and Seasons reminds us:

The reassuring news this day is that God, unlike so many who hold power in this world, is already reconciling the world to God's own self and us to one another. We enact this new reality each time we pass the peace or come to the Lord's supper, not because we have finally achieved the peace we seek, but because in Christ God's future reign of peace has already broken into our present.

How art thou within thyself? “How *are* you – *really* – inside and outside?”

Where does it hurt? Where does it twinge? Where does it cry out? Listen to those signals,,...pause...pray...reflect...and seek out the healing that you need.

Jesus comes to us in bread and wine, Jesus comes to us in heavenly form, Jesus comes to us in very real people who want to help. We are the heart and hands and feet of Jesus for one another.

Healer of Our Every Ill

*Refrain: Healer of our ev'ry ill, light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.*

*You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness,
Spirit of all comfort: fill our hearts.*

*In the pain and joy beholding how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision: God of love.*

*You who know each thought and feeling, teach us all your way of healing,
Spirit of compassion: fill each heart.*

*Give us strength to love each other, ev'ry sister, ev'ry brother,
Spirit of all kindness: be our guide.*

Open yourself to that healing that Christ offers, so that you may become
Christ's healing for others.

Amen.