



Handout for week of 7-16-18; Mk. 6: 30-34, 53-56 & Jer. 23: 1-6

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Jer. 23: 1 Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith HaShem. 2 Therefore thus saith HaShem, the G-d of Israel, against the shepherds that feed My people: Ye have scattered My flock, and driven them away, and have not taken care of them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith HaShem.

3 And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. 4 And I will set

up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, saith HaShem. 5 Behold, the days come, saith HaShem, that I will raise unto David a righteous shoot, and he shall reign as king and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, HaShem is our righteousness.

#### COMMENTARY:

It was 605 BCE, four years into the king's reign, when Jeremiah received word from God to make a scroll collecting all his prophecies thus far, and take it to the Temple to read aloud. Jeremiah sent Baruch, his secretary, to read the scroll. The nobles reported to the king, who requested a royal reading. As Baruch read the scroll, the king took his penknife and cut off each column as it was read, dropping in the burning coals that they had lit to warm the winter palace.

Later Jeremiah rewrote the scroll from memory, and added more as time went on. It seems to be the basis of the prophecies in the first 25 chapters of his book. The rest is largely biographical accounts about Jeremiah, written by Baruch and others.

Some ten years and four kings later, Jerusalem was coming to the end of its days, as Jeremiah had consistently warned. And in a series of chapters that mark the end of the scroll, Jeremiah summarized his experience of those kings. Beginning with Jehoahaz, through Jehoiakim, the king with the penknife, Jeconiah, the boy who was taken into exile, Jeremiah issues his oracles.

And then he comes to the last king, the one whom Babylon placed on the throne as the time of Jeremiah's writing – Zedekiah. His name means "The Lord our Justice." He was to be the last king in Jerusalem. And Jeremiah's tribute to him is today's first reading. Jeremiah doesn't name him in today's reading. He simply says that a day will come when Judah will have a king who will be given the name "The Lord of justice." As if to say that some day there will be a king who actually deserves that title, unlike Zedekiah, the present occupier of the throne. He doesn't deserve the name he bears.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 125-6..