

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 7
WEEK OF JULY 26



Growth Group Summer 2020

The Righteous Branch

Week 7 – July 26, 2020 - Jeremiah 23:1-8, 31:31-34, and Luke 1:32-33

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

Ever since the death of Josiah, the kings of Judah had been leading their people further and further from God. Many of the prophets had been doing the same thing. Oftentimes, the church looks outward and blames the culture for leading people away from God. Surprisingly, in Jeremiah it is the “insiders” - the kings and prophets - who were corrupting the faith. You can read more, about the kings, in Jeremiah 21-22. It is somewhat discouraging to realize that faith can be compromised from both outside and within the faith community.

Beginning in verse 5, Jeremiah writes about the “righteous branch.” The branch of a tree bears fruit and sustains the life of the tree. It holds great significance throughout the Bible and is used literally, symbolically, and metaphorically over 100 times in Scripture.

The branch, referred to in this passage, will ultimately bear fruit which will unite God with his people forever. We understand Jeremiah’s prophecy to be of the anticipated Messiah who is called the righteous branch, not only because he himself was righteous, but because he will make his people righteous.

Jeremiah 23:7-8 lets the people know that this new thing that God is doing will be more spectacular than the Exodus. This is saying a lot because the story of the Exodus was a major part of the Jewish faith. The one who will be called “The Lord is our Righteous Savior” will do something that is even greater than liberating the Israelites from Egypt. The Messiah, as we know, will liberate people from their sins and offer righteousness to all people.

Jeremiah 31 describes this in terms of the new covenant. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the language of “new” covenant is used. Covenant is an important word in the Bible and God now says he is bringing a new covenant that will be placed in our minds and written on our hearts. This law will not be written on stone tablets.

The righteousness of Jesus will establish all of this. We will belong to him because he will restore all things through his life, death and resurrection. Oswald Chambers says, “Redemption means that Jesus Christ can place within anyone the same nature that ruled His own life, and all the standards God gives us are based on that nature.”



Exploring the Text

Read Jeremiah 23:1-8, 31:31-34, and Luke 1:32-33

¹ “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. ² Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the Lord. ³ “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.

⁵ “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.

⁷ “So then, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’⁸ but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

³⁴ “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord.

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Pastor Paul starts his sermon by talking about McDonalds’ “Happy Meal.” Name your favorite fast food meal of all time.
- 2) The Lord promises to gather his sheep and place shepherds over them and to care for them. Does this have implications for the church of today? How can the church do this when we are dealing with the coronavirus?
- 3) Do you find the image of describing the Messiah (Jesus) as a righteous branch helpful? Why or why not?
- 4) How does the righteousness of Christ impact our own righteousness? What does it mean to be righteous in God’s eyes?
- 5) Jeremiah 31:31-33 discusses the new covenant. Can you think of different covenants that we read about in the Old Testament? How do the old and new covenant differ from each other?
- 6) Jeremiah 31:33 talks about God placing the law in our minds and writing it on our hearts. What does it look like to live in a way that the law is written on your mind and heart?
- 7) How is Jeremiah 31:34 reflected in the ministry of Jesus Christ?
- 8) Tim Keller says, “It is not the strength of your faith, but the object of your faith that actually saves you. Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch.” When it comes to your faith in Jesus, how have you seen this statement to be true?