

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 7.18.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for Sunday, July 18, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (at 9:00 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Jeremiah 23:1-6 God's remedy for rotten shepherds

¹“Woe to the **shepherds** who destroy and scatter the **sheep** of my pasture!” declares the Lord. ²Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the **shepherds** who care for my people: “You have scattered **my flock** and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. ³Then I will gather the remnant of **my flock** out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their **fold**, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will set

shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord. ⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares 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 dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our **righteousness**.’”

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JEREMIAH, CHAPTER 23

1. The shepherds mentioned in vss. 1 and 2 are the leaders of God's people. What evil have they done? See also Ezekiel 34:1-6.
2. What is God's promised response to their unfaithfulness (vss. 2a – 6)?
3. Who do you think is this “righteous Branch” and king mentioned in vs. 5?
4. Unpack the phrase “the Lord is our righteousness.” What does that mean for you?

2ND READING: Ephesians 2:11-22 Before and after experiencing the grace of Jesus

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands — ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our **peace**, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of **hostility** ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making

peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the **hostility**. ¹⁷And he came and preached **peace** to you who were far off and **peace** to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO EPHESIANS, CHAPTER 2:

1. Vss. 11-12 describe the situation of the Ephesians before they were brought to faith. What are some of the points Paul makes regarding their circumstances before being saved?
2. What has God done and what is He doing for us now in Jesus (vss. 13-22)?
3. What is the “**hostility**” mentioned in vss. 14 and 16?
4. What message is Paul communicating by using the term **peace**?
5. We, unfortunately, often think of Christianity as a private, individual experience. What contrary message does Paul send in vss. 19-22 about how our faith is not individualistic?

THE GOSPEL: Mark 6:30-44

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a **desolate place** 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 **desolate place** by themselves.

³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were **like sheep without a shepherd**. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a **desolate place**, and the hour is now late. ³⁶Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷But he

answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii (*about \$24,000*) worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO MARK, CHAPTER 6:

1. Why do you think the term ‘desolate place’ is used three times here?
2. How does vs. 34 connect with the Jeremiah reading above?
3. Does vs. 39 remind you of a line in the 23rd Psalm?
4. The four actions in vs. 41 (took, blessed, broke, gave) remind us of what other meal?
5. Vs. 42 tells us that they were all satisfied. In what ways does Jesus satisfy us?
6. What does the miracle of the loaves and fishes tell us about who Jesus is?
7. In what ways is Jesus our shepherd?
8. In vs. 36 the disciples try to tell Jesus what to do? When do we do that? Is it a good idea to tell God how to do things?