

## “Fulfilled Days”

Based on Jeremiah 26:1-6

Preached on July 21, 2024

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“The days are coming,” the Lord promised. Good thing too! After all, the days were very dark for the people of Judah. How bad were they? Let me tell you. Babylon was an up and coming world power. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon’s gifted war general and king, had defeated mighty Egypt and now his eyes were on Israel. He wanted to gobble her up in a single bite. So Nebuchadnezzar brutally attacked Jerusalem and humiliated King Jehoiakim. He carted off the prophet Daniel and his three friends to Babylon, renaming them Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Humiliation, exile and a labelling with Babylonian names was Nebuchadnezzar’s way of rubbing Israel’s nose in his victory. But we’re not even done.

A couple of years later Nebuchadnezzar viciously attacked Jerusalem again. He set up a puppet king there – and intentionally labelled him with the name Zedekiah, because Zedekiah means “The Righteousness of Yahweh.” It was an insult. Nebuchadnezzar gave his marionette pet king the name Zedekiah to mock God. The Righteousness of Yahweh. He was making fun of God’s apparent weakness by installing a 21-year-old pathetic patsy king who couldn’t make up his mind about much of anything.

Zedekiah was not the righteousness of Yahweh. He was a deeper darkening of already dark days, the very darkest night. He “did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” He led Israel to worship false gods, trust in false things, and made all sorts of false alliances. He ignored the warnings of Jeremiah and tried to silence him. He was the last of Judah’s kings – the end of King David’s line.

The days better be coming, because it couldn’t get any worse. What is the LORD going to do? What does the LORD say? Jeremiah preaches: “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” The Lord comes down hard on those who mislead His people. Who teach them false doctrines. Who introduce false worship. God is very jealous for His people. His people are incredibly precious to Him. He wants what is best for them. They are His flock. His sheep. Nothing gets the Lord’s anger inflamed quicker than when those who have been given the office and responsibility to teach and to lead His people do not teach and lead.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the word “pastor” is the Latin word for “shepherd.” So, woe to the pastors who destroy and scatter God’s flock whether it was in the Israel of the Old Testament or Israel of the New Testament, the church, made up of both Jew and Gentile. Woe to the pastors that do not use God’s Word but instead feed the sheep with whatever garbage they want to hear. “Because you scattered my flock and drove them away and did not care for them, I will punish you for the evil you have done,” declares the Lord. This is a frightful sentence. It terrifies me. It should strike holy fear in the heart of every pastor, every shepherd of the Lord’s people.

And that’s good. After all, we all need to be reminded that God holds pastors accountable for their office. They are accountable to every member of their congregations to keep the promises they made when they were called and ordained. When I was called here I promised before God to preach His

Word purely according to the confessions of the church; to baptize, and serve the Lord's supper according to Christ's mandate and institution; to exercise evangelical discipline of the members; to teach and catechize the young and the old; to hear confession and absolve sins in the Name of Jesus; to tend to the sick, the weak and the dying.

That's exactly why Paul told the pastors in Ephesus: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." That's exactly why Jesus said three times to Peter: "Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep." That's precisely why Hebrews 13:6 says, "Obey your pastors and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account."

Brothers and sisters, one of the big truths in Scripture is that God holds His shepherds accountable. To Himself! Not to be successful but to be faithful! Not to make the flock happy but to keep it faithful to the Lord.

But this is exactly our problem: both pastors and people / shepherds and flocks. We don't want to be under another. We want to be free wheeling, independent, stubborn, sheep. We will not be told what to do, even if it is God who is telling us what to do. We will not be guided, lead, taught, preached to or given to! New Testament Israel is just like Old Testament Israel! Are you surprised?

Jesus got it too. The crowds that followed Him treated Him like some kind of Rock Star, or Hollywood celebrity. They didn't understand Him, or His ministry. They didn't get it. So what did Jesus do? Soak up the attention because at least He was getting it? No. He had compassion on them. His heart went out to them – but there's a surprise in that compassion.

It may not be what you expect. How does Jesus have compassion on them? What does He do? He teaches them! Wants them to understand and works to impart the truth to them. He disciples them. Compassion isn't always shown with a hug, or a shared tear. Compassion is shown in teaching – explaining and unpacking the truth – even if the student doesn't want to learn it – even if the student doesn't want to see themselves as the student. That's why Jesus sends pastors who are shepherd-teachers.

You want to honour your pastor? Thank God for him? Then hear and take to heart God's Word that he's sent to preach and teach. TRUST GOD'S WORD. When the pastor speaks God's Word you are to hear it as God's Word – God's personal address to you. When the pastor calls you to repentance it is God's call to repentance. When he warns you it is God's warning. When he comforts you it is God's comfort. When he teaches and forgives – it isn't his forgiveness – it is God's – the blood-bought eternal life bestowing forgiveness.

How do you know your pastor is being faithful? When he preaches that Good Shepherd Jesus is FOR YOU and for your salvation. "The days are coming," says the Lord through Jeremiah, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land." When all looks lost – when all are tempted to despair – God will shape the course of history in order to establish the kingdom of salvation. From the sawed off left for dead stump of King David's family tree, destroyed by wicked sin, brazen rebellion, and in your face idolatry, God promises to raise

up a Branch. A king! Not like Zedekiah or any of the unfaithful kings in David's lineage. God will give a king unlike any other earthly king. He will be a righteous king! A king who will do justice and righteousness in a land and an earth that know neither.

Who is Jeremiah talking about? You know. It's King Jesus! Through Jeremiah God is promising the Messianic kingdom to Israel and to the world.

So the prophecy of Jeremiah has been fulfilled. The days that were promised have come. God has raised up this righteous Branch on David's tree. He was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. He was baptized in the Jordan River. He preached and taught with the compassion of God. He hung on the Good Friday cross to die for Israel, the world and FOR YOU.

Jesus is God's Shepherd King. He did justice to your sin by taking it in His body and getting damned with it in your place. He did what is right by atoning for all your sin with His divine bloody sacrifice on the cross. He takes all your bad and gives you all His good! He takes your sin - and in exchange He gives you His righteousness. He takes your hell and gives you His heaven.

Brothers and sisters, you and I are very fortunate to live in those days that Jeremiah could only see from a distance. These are the last days - the days in which God is gathering His scattered people, baptizing all nations, teaching them, gathering them into the church under shepherds who will lead and guide them according to His Word.

You are part of that. You are baptized. In that baptism you have His very Name stamped, branded, tattooed on you, His very own mark of ownership. You are taught. You are fed with His Word and you come to His Table to eat. You are under the care of Good Shepherd King Jesus.

This is where the rubber meets the road. Did you hear the name - of that promised king? Did you hear it? Yahweh our Righteousness. We are not the righteousness of Yahweh, as Nebuchadnezzar mocked - NO - The LORD is our righteousness. He covers us. He protects us. He's got us.

And that's a name. The name of our king. The name of the King that is totally FOR YOU. Jesus. He is our righteousness. It is His victory name!

What joy! God deals with you through His Son. He puts Jesus between you and Him so that God doesn't see you in your sinfulness. Instead, He sees you covered in the blood of Jesus! God looks at you through "rose colored glasses," stained red by the blood of Good Friday King Jesus. He refuses to count your sin against you. It's all filtered out and cleansed by the holy blood of Christ. The only thing God sees now is the righteousness of King Savior Jesus.

So, when things go well in your life Jesus is your righteousness. When things don't go so well in your life, Jesus is still your righteousness. When you stumble, fall flat on your face, and sin Jesus is all the more your righteousness. Even if you are sent into exile, wilderness and the grave, Jesus is your righteousness. In the hour of your death, Jesus is your righteousness.

And finally, on the Last Day, when He calls you from the grave, He will still be your righteousness and you, precious ones, will still be His righteous people! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.