

Sermon 21/7/24

Jeremiah was not talking about real shepherds with real sheep but was using a common metaphor for kings and rulers.

Israel had been warned what would happen when they had demanded a king from Samuel. God told Samuel that the demand was a rejection of God as supreme authority rather than rejecting Samuel as a prophet.

The history of the Kings of Israel has a few high points – but even the best kings had many flaws. I am sure we all remember the adultery and murder committed by David.

The kings who were supposed to care for and ‘shepherd’ the people and the nation instead oppressed and betrayed the people. They led them into idolatry, into dangerous alliances leading to defeat, destruction and exile.

God promises to punish the bad shepherds and raise up good shepherds and as a result the people “shall no longer fear or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing”

The last part of our reading from Jeramiah said,

The 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. In 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."

As Christians we understand that Jeramiah is speaking about Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The good Shepard who gathers his flock from all parts of the world – men and women out of every language, nation and culture to be his people.

As in the parable, Jesus is the good shepherd who goes off to find the missing lamb, as it says in John 10, the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

Unlike the bad shepherds that Jeramiah talks about at the start of the reading who destroy and scatter, Jesus gathers together and gives life – building people up and restoring a true relationship with God.

As it says in John 14 – He is the way and the truth and the life – nobody comes to the Father except through him.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are our Good shepherd – gather us into your flock and help us to lives that show we are yours and you are ours. Amen.