***Jeremiah 23:1-9 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord. 2Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. 3“But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord.***

***5“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 6In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7“Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 8but, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.” 9My heart within me is broken Because of the prophets; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man,  
And like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the Lord, And because of His holy words.***

We’re with Jeremiah tonight, as he receives a prophecy from God regarding the leadership of the nation of Judah, both the religious and civil leadership. We learn of the sins of the false prophets, priests, and other authorities, but we also receive a blessed assurance of the Messiah to come and His ultimate Righteousness that will heal our separation from God. He will be the True Righteousness, and not like so many false leaders claiming righteousness. Our hearts long for the day that Jesus comes to gather His own.

Verse 1 *Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord.* Jeremiah receives this word from God - Woe to the shepherds, or the pastors, having the idea of Alas. The word for shepherds or pastors here is the same one that was used in Jeremiah 2:8 – there it meant both religious leaders and civil leaders. Woe to, or alas for, the leaders of my people, governors, priests, and prophets, who act as corrupters and bring no repentance and reform to My people in My pasture.

Verse 2-4 *Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. 3“But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord.* Thus says the Lord to those that are charged with the care and feeding of My people. God knows that the shepherds are not acting in a faithful fashion and they are not executing His plan. Likewise, He sees that the people are not being faithful and following His plan, yet He still refers to them as His people based on the covenant that He made. The priests, pastors, shepherds, and prophets are called to feed God’s people, just as pastors are called to feed the sheep today. But the pastors of that day did not do so and many pastors are failing to do so today. God now states His charge against these shepherds – You have scattered My flock. By way of oppression, violence, as we studied under Jehoiakim last week, the people have been driven away from worship and have been left to seek peace and security elsewhere. The people have been dispersed, either by choice as they were being persecuted and oppressed by the leaders or by force as they were carried away by Assyria and soon Babylon. They have gone astray after idols and other sins because of the poor leadership they have been shown. Behold, God now says, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings. God will visit upon the shepherds and other errant leaders the consequences of their sin. But I will gather a remnant, God will gather them there in verse 3. He will seek His faithful ones no matter where they have been scattered and bring them back from the countries where He drove them. It was by God’s justice and providence that the people were dispersed, so they could turn their attention back on God. Now, it is by God’s mercy that they shall be gathered, even after the neglectful and wicked shepherds betrayed God and led the people astray. God will bring them back to the promised land and they will be fruitful, and increase. Then God says, in verse 4, I will set up shepherds over this fruitful remnant, and the shepherds will not only be their leaders, but also they will feed the people. The people will be fed with knowledge and understanding of God’s word. The people will no longer fear, because oppression will pass away. Enemies will assault no more. They will dwell peacefully. None of them will be lacking. This prophecy is referring to the times of Nehemiah and the return of the people from Babylon. Nehemiah and Zerubbabel were faithful shepherds for God. They didn’t live in houses of cedar like Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, but they were blessings. God is the source of all peace and prosperity. Pastors and shepherds are vessels for God to use, not sources of the blessings.

Verse 5-6 *“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 6In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* Now, we receive a Messianic prophecy. A King, a Branch and we know that this is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God says – Behold, the days are coming. This holds the idea of this being a sure thing and there can be no doubt. I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness. As the Assyrians conquered Israel and then the Babylonians conquered Judah, those that did not understand the prophecies concerning these things and the fact that there would be a dispersion of the Jewish people for 70 years think that the house of David has been wiped out – that the Davidic line of kings ends with Jeconiah, as we saw last week in verse 30. But we know that our God is a God of Promises. He made a promise and He will keep the promise. God is promising a King that shall reign and prosper – This secures the Covenant with David. His house will be raised and will rule again. This new King will be greater than all, even greater than Solomon. This is clearly a prophecy of Christ. Though the Jewish teachers deny that this is a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, they do not deny that this is a clear prophecy of the coming Messiah. Isaiah 4:2, Isaiah 53:2, and Zechariah 3:8 all refer to the Messiah with the term branch. Here He is called the righteous branch. He is righteous and his people are made to be righteous, by His blood. This righteous King, we know now to be Jesus, will not be like earthly kings. He will set up His kingdom and He will be victorious over all kings. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess. He will be prosperous and God will commit all of the Kingdom to Him. Jesus will execute righteousness and judgement in all the earth, perfectly ruling. This is unlike earthly kings, even of David’s lineage, who oppress and persecute. This King will break the power of Satan and bring the perfect Kingdom, living in Holiness. Under His rule, or In His days, Judah will be saved. All the people of God, Israel, Judah, and the Gentiles that will be grafted in, will be saved with eternal salvation by way of the Cross. His Sacrifice moved us from condemnation of guilt and shame due to sin to the favor of Almighty God through the blood of Jesus. Believers will be grafted in. The people will dwell safely and securely, with God to protect them. As Psalm 91:1-2 reminds us *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* ***2****I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.”* Believers will place their confidence in the Most High. And now we hear the Name above all names. He will be known as the Lord, Jehovah, Our righteousness. In Matthew 16-16, we find the genealogy of Jesus - *David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.****7****Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.****8****Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah.****9****Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah.****10****Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah.****11****Josiah begot****Jeconiah*** *and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.* ***12****And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.****13****Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor.****14****Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud.****15****Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob.****16****And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.* It’s valuable to understand the begats in the Bible. His people will call Him The Lord. Of course, we know that the angel told Joseph in Matthew 1:21 that he would call the child Jesus, but then we notice that in Matthew 1:23, the angel says they will call him Immanuel - *Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and* ***they shall call*** *His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”* By His sacrifice, we can stand in righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* It’s by Him that we are justified, sanctified, and saved, when we believe and call upon His name.

Verse 7-8 *Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 8but, ‘As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.”* Jeremiah now prophesies the greatest Salvation of all – the coming of Jesus. His deliverance of us into an eternal promised land is a far greater deliverance than the exodus from Egypt. We remember these words from Jeremiah 16:14-15. Then, the words seemed to be pointing toward the return of Israel from the 70 years of captivity, but here it is much more in the light of the coming Messiah. In 1 Kings 6:1, we read of the building of the first temple by King Solomon. One theologian pointed out that the first temple was built 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. 490 years after Israel’s return from Babylon, Jesus arrived to bring the Gospel and point us toward an eternal Temple, with eternal worship (we studied this timing in the book of Daniel). Of course, we know that the only true deliverance of souls is through Jesus Christ and not through sacrifices and the Law.

Verse 9 *My heart within me is broken Because of the prophets; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, And like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the Lord, And because of His holy words.* Jeremiah now starts a new line of thought, which we will, Lord willing, take up in our next Evening Service. This is pointed toward false prophets. Jeremiah sees the horrible sin of the false prophets and how they are destroying the people. They are professing to be speaking for God, yet they speak from their own mind and invent the things they say. He feels in a state of agitation and grief for what he is seeing. The Holy Spirit is showing him, through His Holy Word, the sin of these prophets and the impact it’s having on the lives of the people.

And so we will leave Jeremiah tonight. As his heart breaks for the sin he sees and the lies being told in his time, so our heart breaks for the lies and wickedness we see in our nation and in our time. Jesus says – I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says - *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should* ***believe the lie,******12****that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* We have great joy tonight and great hope. We have believed on the Truth and we speak to others of the Truth and we know that, one sweet day, we will come into His presence. Until that time, let’s be in prayer and be about witnessing, that others may hear and come to the Truth as well.