



ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH
PRAYERS AND REFLECTION BASED ON
Jeremiah 23:1-8
April 29th 2026

Restoration after Exile

23 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. ²Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall no longer fear or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord.

The Righteous Branch of David

⁵The 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. ⁶In 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."

⁷Therefore the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, "As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," ⁸but "As the Lord lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." Then they shall live in their own land.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord and Creator of all this, was and will be it's good to be in the quietness of my heart. As I reflect on the words of the prophet Jeremiah, I am made aware of the pain of leadership that misguides and wounds. I ask for your guidance in my life, that I may be the shepherd who cares for others with compassion and integrity.

Restore me, O Lord, and gather those who are scattered and lost, bring us all together again in safety and with hope. May your promise of a righteous branch dwell in those who have gathered, lead us and help us to trust in you fully once again, especially when trust in people is so often abused. I rest fully in your love, knowing that you are greatest shepherd of all. In your name I pray amen.

THANKS AND PRAISE PRAYER POINTS

- Thank you, God, for the faithful leaders and mentors in my life
- Thank you for the promise of restoration, knowing that you gather the scattered and heal the brokenhearted.
- Thank you for your unwavering faithfulness and the hope Jesus offers
- praise and honour for you Jesus for your commitment to justice and fairness in the way you lovingly care for your flock
- praise the Lord for not letting go of your people, and the power to change people
- happily praising you Lord for being the one who's descendant from 'David a righteous Brach,' who has come to be my Saviour and hope.

PRAYER POINTS FOR CONFESSION

- I confess Lord for the ways in which I have failed to lead or guide others with integrity, acknowledging my shortcomings as a shepherd
- I confess my moments of doubt and disbelief in God's promise of restoration, looking for forgiveness for not fully trusting God.
- I confess for the times when I have been responsible for the scattering of people because of my indifference, being unkind, or lack of understanding

WORDS OF GRACE

Lord, I have placed the worst of my thoughts and actions into your hands of love, mercy and grace. You have promised to cleanse me when I confess my sins. I do now so confess and rest peacefully in the cleansing palm of your hand. Thanks be to God amen.

REFLECTION:

This week our reflection focus is on Jeremiah's image of God's heart for God's people, particularly in the perspective of leadership and spiritual guidance. Here, God condemns the shepherds of Israel who have failed to properly care for the well-being of their flock. The imagery of shepherds reflects points us to a physical 'person' leading the people, but it's deeper than that. The shepherd is also responsible for spiritual guidance for his flock – the heavy weight which come with responsible leadership. This prophetic message is very similar to what leaders face today, where both spiritual and secular leaders often struggle with their integrity and authenticity.

Jeremiah starts like many prophets do, with a rebuke, telling everyone of the consequences of negligent leadership – it isn't pretty. 'Woe to the shepherds

who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord.’ This plea resonates with many today who may feel abandoned or misled by those in authority. God’s concern for the people is clear – for the spiritual shepherds to do their job to uplift and protect their flock rather than exploit or abandon them, and still expect to be their leaders. This call to accountability is a reminder that leadership, whether in the church, community, or family, carries with it quite a load of responsibility.

Very early in the passage Jeremiah informs that God’s intention is to gather those who have been scattered, promising a future where their leadership will be from shepherds who possess the qualities of righteousness and justice. This promise is answered in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and his unfaltering leadership. He leads not only with authority but with love and humility, giving hope to the weary and the people society leaves behind.

This makes us ask ourselves to reflect for a moment on leadership at the present moment, as well as our approach to leadership – whether it’s in the home environment, our communities, or within our circles of influence. Are we nurturing those who are entrusted to us, or are we stuck on our path wanting to achieve it without considering the needs of others? It challenges us to examine how we can better reflect the character of the Good Shepherd in our individual life.

One of the wonderful things about our Christian faith is we always have the arms of hope wrapped around us. It reassures us that despite the many failures in leadership, God remains committed to the people of God. God’s work is never completed and continues working to restore and redeem, bringing together those who have felt lost, bringing the scattered people into the fold once again. As you take the time to meditate on the words of Jeremiah, I pray you seek to take on and model the qualities of a faithful shepherd, ensuring that your leadership is one of compassion, integrity, and a heart that reflects God’s unwavering love, mercy and grace. In a world where guidance often feels lacking, I hope you find encouragement from Jeremiah’s passage to trust in Jesus, our Shepherd and his promise of restoration.

PRAYER OF INTECESSION

Dearest Lord, I remain your humble servant continually seeking your wisdom and guidance. In the same way you admonish the shepherds of Israel, I pray for our leaders in governments, churches, and organisations -grant them wisdom, integrity and honesty in their everyday dealings with the people they have authority over. Hold them accountable to shepherd your people with compassion and a heart which is right in your eyes. I plead for those who are

scattered far and wide across this great world, that you may gather them under your care. Raise up faithful leaders who speak your truth and lead with justice for all. May I find hope in your promise of restoration and continual presence in my life. In faith, I trust in your guidance, love, mercy and grace. Amen

Sit back with your eyes closed and listen deeply to the words of this song.

I hope you enjoy it!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPwd_TQpsHY&list=RDZYkZE8AogDE&index=2

