***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Worship Series – Week 2**

***Sticks and Stones – Jeremiah***

**March 13, 2022**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Call to Worship:**

Remember the old adage, “Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me?” Think of something you have heard during the course of your life that was formative to you. Hopefully this memory is a positive one, but maybe your moment impacted you in a negative way. Words can hurt…sticks and stones can do real damage. So can words. But words can also heal. The words of people we trust, people who influence our lives, can impact us significantly for good or for bad. What about words from God?

Today we will study the prophet Jeremiah’s words in Jeremiah 23. Jeremiah prophesies on behalf of God:

***5****The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David’s line, and he will rule as a wise king. He will do what is just and right in the land.****6****During his lifetime, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And his name will be The Lord Is Our Righteousness.*

Jeremiah 23:5-6 (CEB)

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 23-24)

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| **SB#349 – Yet once again, by God’s abundant mercy** | TB-494 – Pilgrims | HTD5-T16 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#52/SOS#17 – O worship the king** | TB-479 – Hanover  SOS-17  HC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)  HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#56/HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den Herren  HC-251 | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD24-T11 |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **SB#39/HC#121 – Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee** | TB-367 – Europe  HC-121 | HTD3-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD11-T11 |
| **SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is king!** | TB-200 – Darwalls  HC-298 | HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)  HCD28-T18 |
| **SB#283 – Come, Thou almighty king** | TB-198 – Moscow | HTD2-T2 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#938/HC#277 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-394 – Austria  HC-277 | HTD1-T2 – (3 vs.)  HCD26-T17 |
| **HC#282 – Christ for the World** | HC-282 | HCD27-T12 |
| **SB#1010 – Peace in our time, O Lord** | TB-162 – Diademata | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.) |

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| **Drama – The Good Shepherd – Not!** |

***The Righteous Branch***

**Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** In the Bible, leaders are often described as shepherds, those who lead and care for the people, the sheep. But the leaders in Jeremiah’s time were preying on their own people. We see this described in strong language in Jeremiah 23:

**Women:** ***1****Watch out, you shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.****2****This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, proclaims about the shepherds who “tend to” my people:*

**Men:** *You are the ones who have scattered my flock and driven them away. You haven’t attended to their needs, so I will take revenge on you for the terrible things you have done to them, declares the Lord.*

**Leader: *3****I myself will gather the few remaining sheep from all the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.****4****I will place over them shepherds who care for them. Then they will no longer be afraid or dread harm, nor will any be missing, declares the Lord.*

**Women:** Shepherds are supposed to protect their flock, care for them, defend against attackers, and find them when they are lost. They aren’t supposed to hurt their sheep. The responsibility of the shepherd is to lay his life down for the sheep if necessary.

**Men:** ***5****The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David’s line, and he will rule as a wise king. He will do what is just and right in the land.*

**Women: *6****During his lifetime, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And his name will be The Lord Is Our Righteousness.*

**Leader:** Sticks and stones. Words can hurt and words can heal. Jeremiah offers God’s extraordinary promise of healing in words like *righteous, just, right,* and *righteousness.*

**ALL:** These words embrace God’s character as well the characters of individuals and communities. It is difficult to separate justice and righteousness. The words are healing words.

**Leader:** Jesus chose to be born in this world, feel sickness, taste loneliness, and know what it means to be in our skin. That’s the God we worship: God who chooses us time and time again. The one who created us and who loves us deeply. God, revealed in Jesus, whose actions and words exemplified justice and righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:1-6 (CEB)

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 24-27, 30)

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| **HC#123/SOS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SOS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#34 – I believe that God the Father** | TB-360 – Bethany | HTD11-T1 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#287/HC#91 – Fan the flame in me** | TB-608 – same  HC-91 | No HT CD  HCD8-T11 |
| **SB#355/HC#112/SOS#71 – The Potter’s Hand** | TB-867 – same  HC-112  SOS-71 | No HT CD  HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |
| **HC#178 – Speak, O Lord** | HC-178 | HCD16-T18 |
| **HC#193/SOS#156 – Soldiers’ Hymn** | HC-193  SOS-156 | HCD18-T13 |
| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of your peace** | TB-751 – same  HC-262 | No HT CD  HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#418/HC#269 – People need the Lord** | TB-797 – same  HC-269 | No HT CD  HCD25-T19 |
| **HC#281 – More Like Jesus** | HC-281 | HCD27-T11 |
| **HC#287 – Build My Life** | HC-287 | HCD27-T17 |

**Prayers for Forgiveness [Open up to congregation]**

**Pastoral Prayer:**

Loving and gracious God, far too often we spend time as humanity hurting one another with our actions, inactions, and words. Forgive us for the times when we step aside when you ask us to step up. Help us in the moments when we can speak up for those who are hurting and in need. Teach us to be people who acknowledge our hurts and pains as well as the struggles in others. Open our eyes to see more than what is before us. Help us to see opportunities to be your living grace and peace here and now. Thanks be to you, loving God. Amen.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 31)

**Missionary Moment**

**Announcements and Offering**

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| **Children’s Moment** |

**Testimony of Faith – [Choose someone from the congregation who can testify on this theme.]**

**Message – *Sticks and Stones – Jeremiah***

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| **SB#467 – If human hearts are often tender** | TB-17 – How much more | HTD1-T13 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#123/SOS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SOS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **SB#355/HC#112/SOS#71 – The Potter’s Hand** | TB-867 – same  HC-112  SOS-71 | No HT CD  HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |
| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of your peace** | TB-751 – same  HC-262 | No HT CD  HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#418/HC#269 – People need the Lord** | TB-797 – same  HC-269 | No HT CD  HCD25-T19 |
| **HC#287 – Build My Life** | HC-287 | HCD27-T17 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **SB#699/HC#207/SOS#88 – Grace alone** | TB-640 – same  HC-207  SOS-88 | No HT CD  HCD19-T17 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **SB#178/SOS#95 – Jesus, keep me near the cross** | TB-238 – Near the Cross  TB-237 – Healing Stream  SOS-95 | HTD2-T5 (3 vs.)  HTD5-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#208/SOS#63 – When I survey the wondrous cross** | TB-875 – Wondrous Cross (first 16 bars, Boston)  HC-94 (use vs. 2 as chorus)  SOS-63 | No HT CD  HCD8-T14 |
| **SB#482/HC#8 – We’re all seeking the same Savior** | TB-919 – same  HC-8 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T18 |

**Benediction:**

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

**Vocal Benediction:**

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| **HC#198 – In Jesus’ Name** | HC-198 | HCD18-T18 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#936 – Wanted, hearts baptized with fire** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  TB-394 – Austria  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (4 vs.)  HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **SB#938 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-361 – Blaenwern  TB-394 – Austria | HTD5-T3 (3 vs.) HTD1-T2 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#819/HC#202 – O Church, arise** | TB-777 – same  HC-202 | No HT CD  HCD19-T12 |
| **SB#1031/HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence** | TB-740 – same  HC-283 | No HT CD  HCD27-T13 |

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| **Lent 2022 Week #2** | |
| **DRAMA**  **The Good Shepherd – Not!**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Encouragement |
| **Scripture:** | Jeremiah 23:1-8 |
| **Synopsis:** | A shepherd gets terminated. |
| **Characters:** | Jerry – a shepherd not very good at his job  Alistair – Jerry’s boss |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Casual attire and a shepherd’s crook for Jerry. Professional attire for Alistair. |
| **Setting:** | A sheep pasture. |
| **Running time:** | 4 minutes |

[*Jerry is standing center stage leaning on his crook, half asleep.*]

**Alistair:** [*enters and walks up to Jerry*] There you are, Jerry. I’ve been looking all over for you.

**Jerry:** [*through half closed eyes*] Well, I’ve been right here. I haven’t moved in like an hour.

**Alistair:** Yes, well about that. There have been some complaints about your job performance.

**Jerry:** From who? There’s nobody around here.

**Alistair:** [*looking around*] And that’s part of the problem.

**Jerry:** I don’t understand.

**Alistair:** Jerry, can you tell me what your job is?

**Jerry:** Sure. I’m a shepherd.

**Alistair:** And as a shepherd, what is it that you do?

**Jerry:** I watch the sheep.

**Alistair:** [*looking around again*] And where are the sheep you look after?

**Jerry:** [*without looking*] They’re around here somewhere.

**Alistair:** No, Jerry. They’re not.

**Jerry:** [*looking around*] Are you sure? I can swear they were just right here.

**Alistair:** They came back to the sheepfold about two hours ago.

**Jerry:** Cool. So, am I done for the day?

**Alistair:** Yes, I think you’re done. But for more than just today.

**Jerry:** So, I’m on vacation?

**Alistair:** Not quite. Jerry, I’m sorry, but we’re going to have to let you go.

**Jerry:** I know, on vacation.

**Alistair:** [*to the point*] Jerry, you’re fired!

**Jerry:** What?

**Alistair:** [*a bit agitated*] Fired! Terminated! You no longer work here!

**Jerry:** Well, that’s out of the blue.

**Alistair:** Not really. You’re a horrible shepherd.

**Jerry:** What do you mean? The sheep are in the sheepfold, right?

**Alistair:** Yes, they are. But in spite of you, not because of you.

**Jerry:** But still the job got done. [*reasoning*] So when I’m done with vacation I can come back, right?

**Alistair:** No, Jerry. You no longer work for us.

**Jerry:** That seems a bit harsh. I mean, a guy lets the sheep wander off one time . . .

**Alistair:** Actually, this is the seventh time.

**Jerry:** [*unimpressed*] Well, things happen.

**Alistair:** You’ve only been on the job for three weeks.

**Jerry:** So, you say I’m doing better than 50 percent.

**Alistair:** [*stares in disbelief*]

**Jerry:** [*unsure*] And that’s not good enough?

**Alistair:** Not even close. Let me ask you this, what are your responsibilities as a shepherd?

**Jerry:** Well, watch the sheep.

**Alistair:** And do you think you’ve done that?

**Jerry:** Right up until I lost them.

**Alistair:** Jerry, I caught you sleeping.

**Jerry:** I was tired. Do you know how boring it is watching sheep? Besides, I started counting them to make sure they were all here, and one thing led to another.

**Alistair:** And you’re supposed to protect them.

**Jerry:** From what?

**Alistair:** Wild animals, for one thing.

**Jerry:** [*laughing a little*] That’s a good one. I’m sorry, if I see a wolf or something heading my way, I’m running as fast as I can in the other direction.

**Alistair:** [*heavy sigh*]

**Jerry:** You were serious?

**Alistair:** And you’re supposed to keep them from wandering off and getting hurt.

**Jerry:** Again, have you ever been around sheep? All they do is wander.

**Alistair:** But that’s why you’re here. And that’s why we have to let you go. You just don’t seem too concerned about the sheep.

**Jerry:** They kind of smell.

**Alistair:** The owner is very disappointed and has found someone else to do the job.

**Jerry:** Good luck to him.

**Alistair:** He’s already proven to be very reliable. He calls each of the sheep by their name and he even sleeps at the gate of the sheepfold.

**Jerry:** They have names? I just called them all Dude.

**Alistair:** As I was saying, it’s been an interesting three weeks, but your time with us is done.

**Jerry:** What am I supposed to do now? I was just getting the hang of this.

**Alistair:** No, you weren’t. Not even close.

**Jerry:** But you’ll give me a reference, right?

**Alistair:** [*shakes his head and walks away*]

**Jerry:** [*calling out*] Dude! [*exits*]

[*Blackout*]

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Children’s Moment – Week 2**

***Sticks and Stones – Jeremiah***

**March 13, 2022**

**By Katie Laidlaw**

**Scripture:** **1 Thessalonians 5:11; Psalm 119:105**

**Props: Ace bandage/gauze or towel wrapped around arm**

[*The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit or stand around ‘campfire’.*]

**Script:**

[*Holding arm/hand wrapped in towel or gauze*] Ouch! I can’t believe I tripped and fell on my hike this morning. I sliced my hand open pretty badly on a sharp stone along the way. Good thing I always carry a first aid kit! This wound doesn’t hurt too bad – I have definitely experienced worse pain!

Have you ever been hurt before? What was it like? [*Allow children to respond*]

There are certain hurts we carry with us and remember clearly. Some of these memories of hurt may come from physical injuries, but most likely, you will remember being hurt by someone’s words.

There is a well-known saying that says: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

I know for a fact that sticks and stones can do real damage – I mean, look at what happened on my hike today! Words are different, and a bit more complicated. Words can hurt, damage, and break; but words can also heal, encourage, and help.

Many times, we forget how important words are. We speak without thinking, or speak only thinking of ourselves.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us: **“…Encourage each other and build each other up.”** (NIV)

God loves when we use our words to show love to others! He loves when our words are sweet and kind—not sharp and cutting, like sticks and stones.

Unfortunately, we cannot count on people to speak to us with kind words. We are all human and fall into sin, causing us to make poor decisions and not act or speak as God desires. Humans will disappoint us, but God NEVER does. God’s word is faithful and true, filled with peace, comfort, joy, love, and grace. We will never be disappointed or wounded in what God’s word has to say to us.

Think about it: if we are filled with God’s word, what will pour out into our lives? [*Allow children to respond*]

Psalm 119:105 says, **“Your word is like a lamp that shows me the way. It is like a light that guides me.”** (NIRV)

When we stand firm on God’s word, no harmful word or action from any person will hold any power over us. If we stand firm in God’s word, we will know the truth, instead of falling into the hurtful lies that people might say about us or to us.

God’s word is true, and we can always count on God to fulfill His promises. God will never let us down, break us, or abandon us. After all, this is why God sent Jesus to die for our sins. He always comes through for His people!

I know I really need God’s word to light my path as I try to follow Him… I am a bit clumsy, after all [*gestures to arm*]!

Let’s pray.

**Main Points:**

* While words can hurt, damage, and break, they can also heal, encourage, and help.
* God loves when we use our words to show love to others. He loves when our words are sweet and kind—not sharp and cutting, like sticks and stones.
* Humans will disappoint us, but God NEVER does. God will never let us down, break us, or abandon us.
* God’s word is true. We can always count on God to fulfill His promises.

**Questions:**

* Have you ever been hurt before? What was it like?
* If we are filled with God’s word, what will pour out into our lives?
* How can we stand firm in God’s word?

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Sermon – Week 2**

***Sticks and Stones – Jeremiah***

**March 13, 2022**

**By Major Katherine Clausell**

**Scripture:** **Jeremiah 23:1-8**

**Introduction:**

Last week at the start of our Lenten series, we compared the kingdom of God to a skyscraper to explore the words of the prophet Isaiah. This week, we will dive into the prophet Jeremiah’s words in Jeremiah 23.

**Opening Illustration:**

What are some sayings that you have heard during the course of your life that has been formative to you?

[*Here are some examples of statements or phrases to share if no one from the congregation does not respond*]:

* “Never pass up a lemonade stand” – a reminder to be open to life’s opportunities.
* “Most people do the best that they can do” – a reminder to stop judging others harshly.
* “What you permit, you promote” – a reminder that our silence and inaction can convey acceptance and complicity.
* “For God’s glory and our good” – a paraphrase of Romans 8:28.
* “When people show you who they are, believe them” – Maya Angelou.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 23-24)

**Transition:**

“Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me.” The words of people we trust, people who influence our lives can impact us significantly. Their words can either heal or hurt. What scars do you carry with you from the careless spoken words of another? While sticks and stones can do a lot of damage, words can also do damage, sometimes even more so.

What about words from God? They, too, can be used to heal and to hurt. The first 28 chapters of Jeremiah focus on the judgment of the Hebrew people. Jeremiah 10:21 provides a great glimpse of the prophet’s feelings toward the religious and political leaders in that time: “The shepherd kings have lost their senses.”

1. **Historical Dilemma** (Jeremiah 23:1-8)
   1. **Fleecing the Flock -** In the Bible, leaders are often described as shepherds, those who lead and care for the people, the sheep. But the leaders in Jeremiah’s time were preying on their own people. We see this described in strong language in Jeremiah 23, where the shepherds *“destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture”* (23:1).
   2. **The religious/political landscape in Jeremiah’s time –** One of Judah’s shepherd-kings, Jehoiakim, chose poorly and withheld tribute from Babylon, angering the Babylonians who invaded Jerusalem shortly after Jehoiakim’s death. The Babylonians took his successor, Jehoiachin, into exile along with the upper-class leaders of Jerusalem and replaced him with Zedekiah. Zedekiah, however, was another bad shepherd, who by 590 BCE decided to withhold tribute once again to Babylon, against the advisement of Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 27:4-8).

(David Garber, Jr.; *Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 25)

* 1. **The cost of failed leadership –** The decision to not pay the Babylonians put the people of Israel in danger. Their failed leadership cost the people their freedom and sent them into exile. They scattered and destroyed the “sheep of [God’s] pasture” (Jeremiah 23:1). Shepherds are supposed to protect their flock, care for them, defend against attackers, and find them when they are lost. They are to lay down their lives for the sheep, if the situation calls for it.
  2. **The Lord our Righteousness –** Zedekiah was the last King of Judah before the destruction of the kingdom by the Babylonian empire. Zedekiah’s name means “the Lord is my righteousness.” Fast forward to Jeremiah 23:5-6, where the prophet speaks of the coming righteous and wise king whose name will be “The Lord is Our Righteousness.” The similarity to Zedekiah, “the Lord is my righteousness” is not a coincidence. Jeremiah deliberately contrasts the coming righteous leader with the present leader, Zedekiah, the shepherd who has failed the sheep.
  3. **The mark of good leadership –** Jesus tells a parable about a shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep to search for one that was lost (see Luke 15:3-7 and Matthew 18:10-14), thereby demonstrating God’s love for each individual person. Jeremiah 23:5-6 prophesizes: *“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David’s line, and he will rule as a wise king. He will do what is just and right in the land… And his name will be The Lord is Our Righteousness.”*

So, in Jeremiah’s time, the leaders of Judah abused their power over and over again. They were trusted with the power and given the authority to care for the people, but the Shepherd-kings hurt their sheep. Yet, Jeremiah offers God’s extraordinary promise of healing in words like righteous, just, right and righteousness. It is difficult to separate justice and righteousness.

*(Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 25-26)

1. **Current Context and Challenge** 
   1. **Abuse by those in authority** - Unfortunately the abuse of those in authority happened then and it sadly happens even today. Who comes to mind as people who abuse their position and authority? Unfortunately, there are far too many leaders in the church, not just in the secular world, who have abused their authority. That’s the world the people in Jeremiah’s day were living in. In many ways, we are still living in that world today. Where have you seen community leaders looking out for themselves only? What about religious leaders? What might the prophet Jeremiah say to such leaders today?
   2. **Justice is coming –** Although our world is full of injustice, Jeremiah 23 serves as a promise to God’s people that He intends to set things right and justice is coming. God will act personally to care for the sheep and raise up good shepherds who will care for them (Jeremiah 23:3-4). Until then, we are commanded *“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”* – Micah 6:8 (NIV).
   3. **Biblical Justice vs. Social Justice –** There have been countless arguments or exchanges of words regarding the notion that social justice is not the same as biblical justice. Many believe that to champion social justice is a distraction and takes the church “off mission.” While many would agree that systemic inequalities exist in our society, there are just as many who would argue that the pursuit of “social” justice is not the business of the church. This 6-letter word, “social,” when added to the word “justice,” has caused division and vitriolic exchanges among followers of Christ. So much so that the work of justice has become contested.
   4. **Is social justice socialism?** – Many in the church liken the term social justice to socialism or communism and, as such, consider the pursuit of social justice as an anti-biblical solution to the problem of injustice in society.
   5. **Justice and Righteousness –** It is difficult to separate justice and righteousness. Both are healing words. When Jeremiah names the righteous king, “The Lord is **Our** Righteousness,” he names the character of God and of the community. In The Salvation Army publication, *Jesus and Justice*, justice is defined as “living right while righting wrongs.” Being, living, and acting right before God is meant to be done in community (in a social context). So, while the leaders of Judah looked out for themselves and ultimately put the people in danger, the ironic shift from the name of Zedekiah to the name of the righteous king who would come, reminds the people of Judah, and us today, of the importance of community. Leaders and communities are called to be just and righteous as God is just and righteous.

*(Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 28)

*(Jesus and Justice Publication, 2011, ISJC)*

1. **Our Response –** Judah’s leaders were supposed to be caring for the people, but instead they were abusing their authority. Zedekiah means, “the Lord is my righteousness.” He was one bad shepherd who didn’t consider his flock. Jeremiah was moved to deep irony in the promise of restoration in Jeremiah 23:1-8. In that promise, Zedekiah’s name moved from “me” to “we.” The contrast between his name and the name of the promised righteous descendant from David’s line tells much of the story. His name would be, “The Lord is Our Righteousness.” Jeremiah’s irony underscores the difference between the kings of his day and the promised righteous king. Sticks and stones. Words can impact our lives in powerful ways.

Jeremiah’s promise of a righteous and just king in verses 5-6 speak profoundly to Christians about Jesus Christ.

In Harper Lee’s famous book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she writes, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view…until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” Jesus walked around in our skin. He chose to be born in this world, feel sickness, taste loneliness, and know what it means to be in our skin. That’s the God we worship. A God who chooses us time and time again. The one who created us and who loves us deeply. God, revealed in Jesus, whose actions and words exemplified justice and righteousness. Words don’t just impact *me*. Words have the power to impact the *we*.

How will your words shape your communities this week? We are called to pursue righteousness and justice together rather than seeking it only for ourselves. This is quintessential social justice.

**[Print in Bulletin]**

**Focus for the Week:**

Spend time each day this week looking for opportunities to provide support and comfort to people in the places where you live, work, play, and learn. Stretch yourself beyond engaging in a good deed and look for a chance to really exemplify Jesus’ love.

del Rosario, DJ. *Wind in the Wilderness.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.