Jeremiah 23:5 Listen, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, who will reign wisely as king and establish justice and righteousness on earth.

I want you to know that Jeremiah, prophet of God, was marked as and treated as a “traitor” by the people of his time. That was done because God had clearly informed Jeremiah that the best thing for the people to do was to surrender to King Nebuchadnezzar. This king and his army were at the gates of Jerusalem. Many of the towns and fortresses of Judah had already been destroyed and the people taken away. All of this was happening because the Southern kingdom of Judah had abandoned the truth of God and turned their back on the proper worship and praise of God. God had told them the Babylonians were coming. For that matter, God had been telling them this for the last 100 years.

So even though this conquest by the Babylonians has been clearly shown by the prophets of God to be God’s punishment for godlessness, the people, led by false prophets and false teachers had decided that God was still going to rescue them. God was going to rescue them because they were Jews! It didn’t matter to them that they had abandoned God and his truth, they were Jews and therefore God had to save them.

They were wrong. The Babylonians won. Jerusalem and the Temple of God was utterly destroyed. The people were carted off to other parts of the world. From all practical viewpoints this was the utter end of this nation, this nation supposedly composed of faithful and true believers. It is a sad history. It is a devastating history. It is what God had brought about because His people had become godless. And in the end, Jeremiah and his writings are included in God’s Old Testament because it is shown he was not a traitor, but a spokesman for God and a beacon of the truth.

Yet that wasn’t the end. God had foretold that a Jewish remnant would return. Not only would a Jewish remnant return, but from this people, as God had promised, would come the Savior. The Savior would change everything. The Savior would fulfill God’s promise of hope, salvation and peace. This would not just be for the people of Jewish descent but rather this Savior would be for all people. Our theme: **THE KING TO COME!**

I do have to tell you how often it appears to me that the problem with the Jewish nation back then is the problem found among Churches today. I guess it’s the old adage that history tends to repeat itself. Just listen to what the Lord says to his people through Jeremiah. **“2Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds who shepherd my people. You have scattered my flock. You have driven them away. You have not taken care of them, but I will certainly take care of you, because of the evil things you have done, declares the Lord.”**

 The Lord speaks these words because his people were no longer listening and trusting in Him. Don’t get me wrong, they were deeply religious! When it came to the practice and outward show of “We are God’s people” nobody looked as good as the Jewish people. But it was a false religion, false belief, false faith. For the past century at least, although they went through the rituals, the purpose, meaning and intent of those rituals and worship were ignored. They did not focus on the Savior foretold and promised in their faith, they rather focused on their works, their idea of goodness, their concept and vision of God. They were wrong.

 And, of course, the people were duped because of their shepherds, their leaders both secular and spiritual. Notice, no one is cut any slack. Whether you are a sheep or a shepherd under these false teachers the words of God apply to you. **“You have scattered my flock. You have driven them away. You have not taken care of them.”** Here is the spiritual judgment of God upon his people and especially the leadership. Instead of faithful and walking with God they were scattered. Instead of being found safely in the sheep pen, they had been driven away. Instead of the truth and wonder of God their souls had been devastated by falsehood and lies. I will tell you, the words at the end of verse 2 I would not want to have spoken to me: **“But I will certainly take care of you, because of the evil things you have done.”** Please make sure you understand. There is God’s truth and there is not. There is God’s faith and there is not. You can’t make up what you want and declare it of God! Make sure that these words are not true in your life.

The next two verses contain hope and promise. God says, **“3I will gather what is left of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their pastures. They will be fruitful and multiply. 4I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them. They will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing, declares the Lord.”**

Here is the long range plan of God. This is a prophecy style that we call “intermediate.” There will be a partial fulfillment in the near future and then later on there will be a complete fulfillment. In this case, in eighty years when God allows the Jewish people to return to their land and even rebuild their Temple that is the partial fulfillment. The complete fulfillment of these words is found in the events of the Judgement Day, when all of God’s people are gathered to him to live in perfect and wondrous eternity. To me the highlight of these words is in that last line: **“They will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing, declares the Lord.”** Our salvation and redemption will be totally and absolutely complete.

The most important words here are verses 5-6. They say this: **“5Listen, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, who will reign wisely as king and establish justice and righteousness on earth. 6In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. This is his name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.”**

These words are about Jesus. Jesus, who as to his human descent was from King David, as God had promised. But Jesus would be different. Let me show you how. First, Jesus would be **“A righteous Branch.”** As you think about this “branch” I want you to think of a tree stump, a stump sitting for years once the tree has fallen. The tree as far as we can tell is dead. From that tree stump, somewhere along a root line, springs forth a shoot, a shoot that grows and will become a tree. That’s Jesus. Taken from the remains of Judaism that has abandoned God, and yet from the remnant of the roots that stayed faithful. And as a branch, he is no ordinary branch but rather is described as “righteous.” This person coming from the Jewish nation will be “right, guiltless, correct, just, and without fault.” Again that is Jesus. God’s Son come to be our Savior. Jesus, born of Mary, descendant of David and yet Jesus, Son of God, the fullness of the deity in bodily form come to be our Savior, holy and pure!

This Jesus becomes a King. There are so many ways to speak of this kingdom of Jesus. Do recognize that until the Judgment Day it will not be a kingdom of this world and yet Jesus has been appointed the final authority in all that happens in this world. Notice our Epistle lesson spoke of **“The kingdom of the Son he loves.”** See, Jesus is a king! The thief on the cross, who in the last moment of death threw himself at the mercy of Jesus, even he was able to grasp in the bloody and dying Jesus something extraordinary. What did he say, **“Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.”** As I said, there is no end to ways we could show that Jesus truly is the King.

And do we really need to debate the wisdom and wise reign of Jesus? I think not. Jesus, with love, compassion and wonderful grace rules over all things for the good of his church and the precious souls under his care. Don’t ever think Jesus is not with you or not taking care of you. He is right there, guiding your soul with the power of his Word. He is right there, as the Holy Spirit enters your heart to know His peace and love. And just take a moment and contemplate his justice and righteousness.

The justice of Jesus is mind boggling. We were lost and condemned sinners and Jesus took and paid the price of our transgressions. As God he knew we could not save ourselves and so He did everything needed to save us. Every one of us should grasp that on our own the hammer of God’s justice will pound down declaring, “To hell with you!” But Jesus changes all of that for us. He took our hell. He paid our debt. And in love and grace He calls to us to believe and trust in Him. In Jesus the hammer never strikes and all we hear from our Father is, “Come in, my child, come to your eternal home.” In Jesus justice and righteousness is served a whole new way. All God asks of us is to believe his wonder. To believe what He has done!

That is the pronouncement of verse 6: **“In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely.** No longer is there doubt and fear. All who believe in Jesus are pronounced God’s children and heirs of eternal life. Do we forget that by faith we become the descendants of Abraham? We are Judah and Israel. We are the true inheritors of the promises and wonders of God. And again do we see how these words are fulfilled in Jesus?

Jesus came and died on the cross for us. Jesus brought to us the gift of eternal life and salvation. Jesus redeemed us, bought us back from sin, death and the devil to gave the gift of eternal life. I can tell you that this message of Jesus helps me to grasp that this life with its trial, tribulations, hardships and struggles is as nothing because I have the wonder of heaven to look forward to. Seriously, what is 90 years of this life compared to an endless life with the Lord in peace and comfort?

And look at how we can identify this savior. The text says, **“This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord our Righteousness.”** I know, you don’t quite understand what this is saying. As far as you know, Jesus has never been called such, at least not as far as we know.

Do you want to grasp how this is realized? As we study the Second Commandment of God one of the first things we need to do is wrestle with what the name of God is. The first thing is that God is called by every name with which he has called himself. In this regard there are several names that belong exclusively to God. Then we learn that God’s name is also everything that God reveals about himself. So, the fact that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, characteristics only God has, those things then become a part of his name. We are not to call anyone else those things or attribute the wonders of God to anyone or anything else. That is a part of what we need to grasp as we think of keeping God’s name holy. And please note that we do this type of thing all the time. When something is unique to a person that literally becomes a part of their name. Example: First President of the USA? Yes, George Washington. He’s the only one who will ever be first. Or, the President that ended slavery? Abraham Lincoln. Or think of what you call me, you do not call me by my name as often as you call me by my office: I am Pastor because that is unique to me here.

The same principle applies to Jesus. He is the one who won us righteousness. He is the one who provides and grants, who clothes us and saves us by His righteousness. We understand clearly that Jesus saves us because of his righteousness and because he grants us that righteousness by grace through faith. Do you get my point?

And then recall that in the latter part of Revelation there is this picture of Jesus. **“I saw heaven standing open, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war in righteousness. His eyes are like blazing flames, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him, which no one knows except he himself.”** I would submit that when we get to heaven and see Jesus that name will be revealed to us and I am not going to be surprised when it is **“The Lord our Righteousness.”** Because that is what he is and has done for us. That is his whole purpose and intent. That we be saved by his righteousness.

Again, so much to think about. So much to marvel at and digest. I don’t have all the answers but what I do know is that a greater part of this prophecy has been fulfilled. Jesus has come. Jesus has won our salvation. Jesus has taken away our terrors and fears. All of this because he is the Righteous Branch and wise King who has established his justice and righteousness for us. Amen.