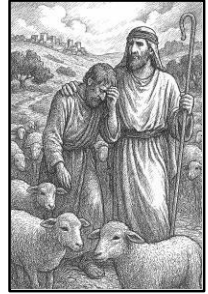


Hope for the Weary

Jeremiah 23:1–6 (NRSVue)



WE GATHER UNDER THE BANNER OF HOPE. But every church has weary people, and they sit in every pew.

Although we approach the American holiday called Thanksgiving, we also celebrate Christ the King Sunday. Jesus is our King, who was predicted by the prophet Jeremiah.

But Jeremiah's words were heavy with judgment. Still, they were radiant with promise. To the weary, to those shattered by reckless leaders, to those longing for justice and safety, the prophet spoke of the God who does not abandon his flock. To those bowed by debt, loss, or illness, hope rose from the Lord's promise.

This passage isn't ancient history; it's a living truth for us on this day of celebration.

Reckless Leaders

Jeremiah began with a sharp rebuke: "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" (Jeremiah 23:1)

Shepherds in Israel were to guide, protect, and nourish the people. Instead, many leaders abused power or left the flock vulnerable. They were reckless. Chaos ruled where peace and justice belonged.

Israel's weary ones knew this pain: their leaders failed, their systems fractured, the authoritative voices misled.

Yet God declared, "I will attend to you for your evil doings." The Lord saw the injustice. He did not ignore corruption among his chosen. He promised to lift the weary, the sick, the lonely and the forgotten.

When our peace is scattered by the failures of those we trust, we remember how God himself is our true Shepherd. Our hope draws from an incorruptible person. God helps

the weary parent with two jobs who can't put enough food on the table. We belong to a higher King, who holds leaders accountable and defends his flock.

Restoring the Scattered

Jeremiah's tone shifted as he spoke the Lord's message: "Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock... and they shall be fruitful and multiply" (Jeremiah 23:3).

God did not leave his people scattered and defenseless. He gathered, restored, and multiplied their lives.

Notice the Lord's tenderness: "They shall no longer fear or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing."

This was hope for the weary: God's promise was not only survival, but flourishing, living in peace and security.

In seasons of exile—whether spiritual, emotional, or communal—God is the One who brings us home. God restores the believing student who's crushed by debt with no ideal path forward. A congregation may be divided by differing opinions, but it's united by Jesus at his table. The Lord restores dignity and ensures that none of his people are forgotten. Earthly leaders scatter the flock; Christ gathers his people.

A Righteous Branch

Jeremiah lifted Israel's eyes to the horizon: "The days are surely coming... when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch" (Jeremiah 23:5). The prophet promised God's exiled people a new king, who'd restore order and hope.

This Branch was not reckless, but *righteous*. He'd reign in wisdom, justice, and peace. The Jews called him the Messiah and awaited his arrival with hope.

For Christians, we see this Branch fulfilled in Christ Jesus—the Shepherd King who lays aside his life for the sheep, for us, for you and me.

His name is "The LORD is our righteousness." Not our strength, not our merit, but his righteousness is our safety.

Hope for the weary isn't found in human leaders, but in the righteous Branch who reigns forever. When a faithful elderly woman is isolated at home, or when a Christian family watches a loved one battle illness without adequate care, Christ is still the King. In this righteous Branch, believers find help, health, and hope.

JEREMIAH SPOKE TO THE WEARY, and his words are the gospel for us. God sees the failures of reckless leaders. God restores the scattered flock with tenderness. God raises up a righteous Branch who reigns with justice and peace.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving on Thursday, let's include gratitude for who Jesus Christ is for us. He's the King who lifts the bent and finds the missing. He's the righteous Branch, who lives in us through his Holy Spirit. He keeps us safe and brings rest to our chaotic days.

Rejoice! Give thanks! Sing to the honor and glory of our Lord and King Jesus Christ.

Amen

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