

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Introduction

Folks don't like it when pastors "meddle in politics." We're supposed to confine ourselves to the Bible, theology, and church. That's because when people think of politics, their minds immediately turn to the separation of church and state. They read this to mean that the church shouldn't get involved in things political. But Webster defines politics as: *the art or science of government*. The word comes from "polis", which means people or community. How can we be concerned with the Bible, theology, and church without thinking about people? The church is made up of **people**. Theology is what we (**people**) think about God. And the Bible is God's Word to His **people**. The teachings of Scripture are meaningless until we apply them to everyday life. And politics is everyday life.

People Are Sheep

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus had compassion on the people, *because they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34)*. Sheep don't do well without a shepherd. They need someone to follow, someone to *lead them beside still waters (Psalm 23:2)* and take care of them. People are sheep; we need a shepherd. God's people had shepherds; the problem was they were bad shepherds. They *have scattered the flock and have driven them away, and [they] have not attended to them (Jeremiah 23:2)*. Judah's shepherds (prophets, priests, and kings) had been leading the people away from God into apostasy for years. There was a brief and somewhat ineffective revival under Josiah. Now, Judah was once again in a serious spiritual decline.

Spiritual Decline Today

The same thing is happening today. Our shepherds, that is, government officials, are leading the country astray. I'm not talking about Socialism, foreign policy, or the economy. We're talking about morals here. According to the Bible, we were created by God, He made us male and female, and decreed how we are to relate to each other. Everyone on the earth comes from one family; we are all one blood, therefore, one race, the human race. According to our government, life spontaneously appeared and evolved into what we are today, so you can be whatever gender you want and relate to each other however you want. It's applauded as diversity. Differences in skin color divide us into different races and into oppressors and oppressed. But it's not just the world. This kind of thinking is being carried out in many churches around the country. Many pastors are also being false shepherds.

The Root Cause

I am not advocating overthrowing the government or ignoring it. That wouldn't solve the problem. The root cause of all our trouble is sin. Since the fall, we have had three primary false shepherds leading us astray: the devil, this fallen world, and our sinful nature. The problem goes much deeper than the government. That's just part of the fallen world.

The Righteous Branch

What is the answer? For Israel, God promised to *attend to [the false shepherds] for [their] evil deeds (v. 2)* and to *gather a remnant of [His] flock ... and bring them [home] (v. 3)*. But He went on to say that He would *raise up for David a righteous Branch (v. 5)*. The Jews saw this being fulfilled in Zerubbabel, who led a remnant back from Babylon. But God is ultimately talking about Jesus. Jesus is the only righteous One. He wasn't born in the usual way, and being divine as well as human, He is sinless. He is the One who brings us back to God.

Jesus Our Shepherd

We need a shepherd today to bring us back to the way of the Lord. And we have one in Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd who *lay[s] down [His] life for His sheep (John 10:15)*. He has come to give us *abundant life (John 10:10)*. He will protect us and *lead [us] into paths of righteousness for [His] name's sake (Psalm 23:3)*. Jesus is the Righteous Branch, the Good Shepherd, leading us in the way we should go.

The Lord Is Our Righteousness

The thing is, we're still separated from God by our sin. *None is righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10; see also Psalm 14:1)*. The devil, the fallen world, and our sinful flesh have led us *astray and everyone has turned to his own way (Isaiah 53:6)*. We see in **verse 6** of our lesson that *the Lord is our righteousness*. Christ is our righteousness. (Read **1 Corinthians 1:30-31**). Our Shepherd has brought us back to the truth and to the Father through His own blood, shed on the cross.

Means of Grace

To say, **THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD** is to also recognize that He is my righteousness as well. Jesus is our Savior who died for us, our Lord who rules over us, and our Shepherd who *leads [us] in paths of righteousness for [His] name's sake (Psalm 23:3)*. This is what Communion is all about. As we receive the body and blood of Jesus, He forgives and strengthens us, drawing us back to Himself. He is the only Shepherd who can do this. Who is your shepherd?

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
