

## **Lenten Devotional March 19, 2021**

### **Scripture**

Jeremiah 23:1-8

*1 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. 2 Therefore 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. 3 Then 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. 4 I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD. 5 The 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. 6 In 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." 7 Therefore, 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," 8 but "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.*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Kristen Renee Barner '97**

I read this passage from my couch, during quarantine and election season. We live in a time of unknowing—not just *not* knowing, for what we used to know about this world has been mightily challenged. And that's not a bad thing. A frightening thing? Sure. But not a bad thing.

These verses from Jeremiah 23 speak of shepherds and leaders, people in charge. "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" Has there ever been a time in any nation when the leader has been flawless? Do we not, in every election season, try to find exactly the right leader to satisfy us?

Lent is often a season of fasting—a season that includes a tradition of prayer and giving something up. We know this tradition. Many if not most of us have been familiar with it our whole lives. But . . .

What if we decide that during this particular Lent we will flip the idea of giving something up and instead challenge what we know about our Lenten practices? Suppose that, instead of giving something up, we take something on. What if we take on the leadership role of dealing wisely and justly, with kindness and concern, for all God's people? We cannot all become elected officials (shepherds), but we can all participate in the communities in which we live.

Yes, this is a time of pandemic. Yes, we must social distance. Yes, we must be mindful of the safety of others and ourselves. But what if, for this particular Lent, we heeded this lesson from Jeremiah by looking after one another? What if, for this particular Lent, we looked deeper into the example of God's radically holy Son? What if we spent this particular Lent remembering, in all that we do, that "The Lord is our righteousness"?

### **Prayer**

God of love, you gather us into this life with one another and called us to care for one another. We ask that you would grant us courage to love one another. We ask that we would recognize your sacred

presence in all people. In this time of Lent, O God, help us to flip our unknowing so that we might know you better. We pray in your name, and the name of your radically holy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.