

Second Midweek Advent Service - December 10, 2008
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

God Promises A Second Shepherd King – Ezekiel 37:24-28

Have you ever been homeless? That is a very difficult experience. Sometimes people become homeless because of lifestyles they have chosen and decisions they have made. Others become homeless because of unforeseen financial problems caused by illnesses or other circumstances. As our economy weakens we are reading about more and more foreclosures as people are losing their homes. We also are being made aware of people who are losing their jobs and as a result are unable to make their house payments or make their monthly rent payments. Some of these people are facing the reality of having no place to live. They are becoming homeless. During the great depression of the 1930's many people became homeless and wandered across our nation looking for work and for a place to live.

In the Word of God before us today the Prophet Ezekiel is writing to a people who have become homeless. He is writing to the Children of Israel from the southern kingdom of Judah who are in captivity in Babylon, modern day Iraq. Why has this happened to God's people? They and their leaders had forsaken the Lord and His Word and had gone and done their own thing. Finally God allowed the Babylonians under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the land of Judah, the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God and take his people away into captivity for 70 years. This was a dark point in Judah's history. The temple that Solomon had built was destroyed and all the gold vessels and the Ark of the Covenant had been looted and taken back to Babylon. The people were homeless. They had lost their homes in Judah and were now living in a foreign nation as refugees and captives. Ezekiel was one of the prophets like Daniel who had also been uprooted from his homeland and was living in Babylon. As the people lamented their situation and thought that all was lost and they would never see their homeland again, God brings his people a message of hope and restoration. **God Promises A Second Shepherd King.** As we listen to Ezekiel's prophecy we note that God promises his people **I) One King; II) One Eternal Home and III) Lasting Peace.**

GOD PROMISES HIS PEOPLE ONE KING

“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.” (V. 24) Ezekiel wrote these words about 400 years after the death of David the son of Jesse. So he can't be referring to King David who ruled over Israel from 1010 to 970 BC. He is referring to David's descendant and greater son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the great shepherd king. Remember our Savior said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15)

The children of Israel had not had good kings prior to their exile in Babylon. In fact, it was the sins of their kings and the people themselves which led to their losing their homeland and the temple of God. They were experiencing the consequences of the wrong choices and decisions that they had made. But God promises them a greater king, a perfect king and perfect shepherd.

We see the same thing happen in our lives and in the history of nations. When we ignore God's Word and choose to live in open rebellion to the Lord and his Word, we experience consequences. God allows us to experience the consequences of our rebellious decisions and choices. We often see the sad results when someone chooses to break the promises that they made to their spouse in marriage. We also see what happens when someone is entrapped in some addiction and can't break out of that sinful trap. It slowly destroys the person and their relationships with others.

This is what the children of Israel were experiencing in Babylon. They were experiencing the consequences of their rebellion. Yet God promises them a perfect Shepherd King whom they will follow and obey his laws and

decrees. When Jesus did come did the people of Israel follow him and obey his decrees? Unfortunately, they did not. In fact, they rejected him as the Shepherd King. So this Shepherd King reached out to all the people of the world. He is your and my Shepherd King. He is our leader and ruler. We listen to his Word; trust his promises and with his help we strive to follow his laws and decrees. In addition to a new a perfect leader the Lord also promises his people a new home where they will live forever.

GOD PROMISES HIS PEOPLE ONE ETERNAL HOME

“They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever and David my servant will be their prince forever.” (V. 25) When you are homeless and are given the promise of a home where you will live forever, that certainly gives you some hope and something to look forward to. In fact, the land that God promises them is the same land that they had lived in before they were forced to leave and move to Babylon. They were going back to their homeland and they would live there forever. Did the people of Israel live forever in that land? No. Why not? Because when the perfect Shepherd King came, they did not follow him and they rejected him and as a result they lost the home that God intended them to have.

However our Shepherd King Jesus has promised us his followers an eternal home. As Jesus said before he went to suffer and die for our sins, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:2-3) We can look forward to an eternal home, a home with our Savior Jesus where we will live with him and all believers forever. How can we be so certain that we will have this eternal home? We are certain because our Shepherd King has established peace for us forever.

GOD PROMISES HIS PEOPLE LASTING PEACE

God says through the pen of Ezekiel, “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers; I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them. I will be their God and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.” (Vv. 26-28) All the people of Ezekiel’s time had known was war and turmoil. Their nation had been overrun by a foreign army. They had been forcefully removed from their homes. Fighting, killing, enslavement, this was their experience. Now God promises them eternal peace.

Jesus Christ is that prince who brought eternal peace. You and I now have peace with our God. Our sins have been paid for. We do not have to satisfy God’s anger and justice because we are imperfect. Jesus Christ has done that by the work he did for 33 years. He was holy in our place. He endured the tortures of hell for us. He has declared us holy and righteous in his sight. When we finally dwell with him in his heavenly sanctuary we will no longer be saint and sinner at the same time, we will be saints truly holy and perfect freed from sin and all its consequences.

During this Advent season we praise and thank our loving Father that he promised and sent a second shepherd King who is our perfect king who has secured for us an eternal home so we will never be homeless and he has won for us a lasting peace – peace with our Creator and eternal peace in glory.

Amen.