

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

An exhortatory reading. The first part is addressed to the bad shepherds. The second part is addressed to the sheep—the people of Israel. Be sure your tone changes for each part.

Jeremiah = jayr-uh-MĪ-uh

Start strong and determined! Use “woe” to sound a warning.

Articulate this line carefully.

Keep your pace and energy up.

How does God feel about these misleading shepherds?

Pause at the end of this line.

Slow your pace a bit. Proclaim with a tone of tenderness and love.

See this gentle pastoral scene unfold before your eyes.

Pause at the end of this line.

Quicken your pace. “Behold” announces exciting news!

Smile as you think of the wise and just rule of this king.

Good news!

Pause at the end of this line.

Very slowly; give each word its weight.

READING I

Jeremiah’s shepherd language draws on the image for kingship in the ancient near East. While many monarchs could, in actuality, be cruel and harsh, ideally the monarch was to be a shepherd who watched over his flock, protected it, kept it together, and took care of any who were injured or sick. That is often what kings failed to do, their failure consisting in their unjust practices and economic oppression. Jeremiah’s brief sermon displays the sad state of things. The emphatic construction “it is you who have scattered my flock” accuses the monarchs of misrule,

LECTIONARY #107

READING I Jeremiah 23:1–6

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

Woe to the shepherds

who **mislead** and **scatter** the flock of my pasture,
says the LORD.

Therefore, **thus** says the LORD, the God of Israel,
against the shepherds who shepherd my people:

You have **scattered** my sheep and **driven** them away.

You have not **cared** for them,

but I will take care to **punish** your evil deeds.

I **myself** will gather the **remnant** of my flock
from **all** the lands to which I have **driven** them
and bring them **back** to their **meadow**;
there they shall **increase** and **multiply**.

I will appoint shepherds for them who **will** shepherd them
so that they need **no longer** fear and tremble;
and **none** shall be missing, says the LORD.

Behold, the days are **coming**, says the LORD,
when I will **raise up** a righteous shoot to David;
as king he shall reign and govern **wisely**,
he shall do what is **just** and **right** in the land.

In his days Judah shall be **saved**,
Israel shall dwell in **security**.

This is the name they give him:

“The Lord our **justice**.”

with the consequence of scattering the flock and causing their exile. Jeremiah predicts that God himself will shepherd the people; he will raise up a new king who will establish justice. In contrast to false rulers, God, the true shepherd, will appoint a worthy ruler from David’s line who will rule wisely. The name of the future king, “The LORD our justice” is a play on the name of the last weak king of the Davidic line, Zedekiah, a name that means “the Lord is my righteousness.” Unlike this phony, the future monarch will be true to his name.

This prophecy proposes a clear break between the failed past and the promised future. In this announcement, one of the clues to the message of hope is the relational language: my pasture, my people, and my flock. God never cancels the covenant. Another emphatic construction opens the door of hope beyond the exile. God says, “You who have scattered my sheep and driven them away. . . . I myself will gather the remnant of my flock.” The theme continues both in the depiction of God’s shepherding and in the announcement that he will raise up new shepherds

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

A *didactic* text makes a point or teaches something. Help your assembly to follow the argument and understand what's being taught.

A didactic reading. The "far off" were the Gentiles (read Ephesians 2:11—for context). Who are the "far off" today? Who is missing from our community? Encourage your assembly to put aside divisions as you proclaim.

Ephesians = ee-FEE-shuhnz

The whole reading is good news about God's great love for all. Be sure that love shows in your voice and face throughout.

A long sentence; pause only at the commas except as noted.

No pause after "enmity" (EN-mih-tee).

Slow on the phrase "one new person Man . . . two."

Set apart the phrase "thus establishing peace."

Slowly and broadly to the end of the sentence.

Pause at the end of this line.

Raise your energy and quicken your pace.

Look directly into the assembly on this last line.

true to their name. That basic assurance is in the words "They need no longer fear and tremble"; when God has saved the people, they will have no need for fear.

The hopeful words about the new shepherd become even more specific. God declares his intention to place a descendent of David on the throne different from the previous one. The primary characteristic of the reign of the new ruler will be righteousness—the proof of the proper relationship among God, people, and king. The future king will administer God's rule

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 23:1–3, 3–4, 5, 6 (1)

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

READING II Ephesians 2:13–18

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

In Christ Jesus you who once were far off
have become **near** by the blood of Christ.

For he is our **peace**, he who made both **one**
and broke down the **dividing** wall of **enmity**, through his flesh,
abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims,
that he might create in himself **one** new person in place
of the **two**,
thus establishing **peace**,
and might reconcile **both** with God,
in **one** body, through the **cross**,
putting that enmity to **death** by it.

He came and preached **peace** to you who were far off
and **peace** to those who were **near**,
for through him we **both** have access in **one** Spirit
to the Father.

by fostering justice and keeping the people safe. Doing justice and defending the rights of the defenseless was the first requisite of the kings at Israel's beginning, and it continues to be the norm here. The safety and security of the people are tied directly to right conduct and defense of the poor.

READING II Paul is teaching here that through Christ's redemptive work on the Cross the religious barriers between Jew and Gentile have been transcended; Jew and Gentile have been recon-

ciled with God and formed into a community, imbued with the same Holy Spirit and worshiping the one Father. Paul alternates between the negative factors that have to be destroyed and the positive outcome of Christ's coming, which is peace. He threads references to Christ throughout: "through his flesh"; "in himself"; "in one body." The negatives are what needs to be dismantled: a barrier, the legalism attached to commandments and decrees, and enmity among peoples. Unity is not just the end of hostility. It