

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

What does it feel like to be in God's presence? Terrible? Frightening? Powerful? Peaceful? Loving? It's all of that and more. We are of course to seek God's presence, but how? Well, by coming to church, where God promises to be with us. When we approach his altar, it makes life complete. Brokenness, for a moment, becomes completeness.

That's what we all long for, something better. A better country. A better place. Something beyond all this. We all long for it. This world doesn't quite satisfy. Never full enough, never happy enough, never high enough, never drunk enough, never quite enough... it's just beyond us. Just beyond this planet. The Infinite Creator, the living God is the only solution to the completeness we seek. He is our only hope, for the hunger and thirst we have for something greater.

We resist that. We struggle with that. And that's ok. Because did you know, all the great heroes of faith, wrestled with God? When we struggle with who God is, when we struggle with what it means, and who Jesus is, that's wrestling with God. It's OK to wrestle, to struggle, to strive to understand. We struggle. We struggle with holiness, with righteousness, with comprehending what a world

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

without sin could look like. When we see God's holiness, his righteous standards, we get upset. We get angry. Because we know we can't reach it, we can't touch it, we can't climb to it, so we feel like a man in a hole 20 feet deep without a ladder to climb out.

We get confused, we think, "Well, I have to try to make myself good enough to be with God." We try to do good stuff, to outweigh the bad stuff we've done. We try to climb the walls of the hole we find ourselves in but just keep sliding down in the mud. But God says stop! Stop striving. God says, "I have done it myself." Instead of striving to do good deeds, to climb the walls of the pit to escape from sin, we must recognize our own inability. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Even Job said, weary and afraid, wondering, "How shall anyone be made righteous with God?" (Job 9:2).

The Apostle Paul, before he became a follower of Jesus, was so proud of his self-righteous practices as a Jew, as a Pharisee, he did everything right, followed the law, fasted and prayed, memorized the Torah, and yet when he saw Jesus, he realized, all his efforts were dirty rags, like manure, filthy.

So, we find ourselves lacking righteousness, don't we? And God will by no means clear the guilty. In fact, he says time and again

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

in His word that we are found guilty before him, guilty of sin. If Jesus isn't your savior today, you are still guilty, and you face a punishment more severe than you could possibly imagine.

Even the punishment for murder in this life is life in prison. But the punishment for our many sins, is permanent imprisonment in a place called hell, a place where we are tortured without end, day and night, without rest, without food, without water, and without any hope. Indeed, there is not a single positive emotion to be experienced in hell. Some of you are headed there today and I'm pleading with you, stop your march to hell, and turn to the narrow road to eternal life.

God's word says the soul that sins shall die; and the wages of sin are death. (Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 6:23). You can pay for your sins with your own blood, in hell. Hell is quite real. Quite real indeed. And indeed, as a pastor, I'm told in the word that if I fail to carry the gospel to those under my care with accuracy, that your blood will be poured over my head on judgment day, as a witness to me, that I failed you, failed to carry the gospel to you. So, I take that very seriously.

Your blood can't pay for your sins in hell, the truth is your blood can't pay off your sins in any way. So, you'll receive the permanent

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

wrath of God in hell, as a permanent state for your soul to live in, consciously, for all time, each day, with new horrors. Or you can allow the blood of another to pay your road home. The blood of a righteous man. But no man is righteous. Who could do such a thing? Could a sinner die for your sins? No, they can't pay anything they're in sin as well. They're in the hole with us. But, one came, who is said to carry our sorrow and our burdens, and the guilt we carried, would be placed on Him. Could any man do this? No, only a God-man, the God-man, the living God inhabiting human flesh, born into the world, Jesus Christ, who being perfect, and never sinning once, became our spotless sacrifice, to offer his blood to purchase us from death, and sin, and hell. Praise the Lord.

We must repent, and put our trust in Jesus Christ, and what he has accomplished. God has paid off the debt. That's the thing. We can't fix it ourselves. We can't do enough good things. We must stop, and rest, in Jesus Christ. Yes, repent of your sins, yes, leave behind your old ways, but instead of trying to force that to happen by your own strength, stop and turn and see, only if cry out to Jesus Christ, then, then and only then, will He be able to do it in me. I can't do it. Only Jesus can do it. So I will let Jesus do it. Surrender. Let go of your own efforts, put your faith in Jesus, throw

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

off the old sins, and cry out to Jesus to make you new. That is the only hope.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet knew that. Israel had turned away from God. They hated God wanted nothing to do with God. Yet there was still hope. Even though Israel would go into captivity, be taken captive in Babylon, later, they would return to Israel, and God would bless them, and help them, and make them new. It says in Jeremiah

5 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord,  
“when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,  
a King who will reign wisely  
and do what is just and right in the land.

In his days Judah will be saved  
and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name by which he will be called:

The Lord Our Righteous Savior.

“So then, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land."

In verse 6 we are given yet another name for God, God our righteousness, or God our rest. We find our rest from sorrows in Jesus Christ. Only in God who provides righteousness to us. We can't earn it. We can't force it to happen. We can only receive it through surrender to God. Submitting to Him, leaving behind our sins and putting our hope in Jesus. Then God becomes our righteousness. We become clean in His sight, because we have believed in Jesus. Jesus did it all for us. We just need to believe in Him. And live for Him. It's just that simple.

There is no list of things to do to make ourselves right with God, God doesn't desire sacrifice, but instead the sacrifice God wants us the sacrifice of a "broken spirit" and a "contrite heart." Let yourself feel sorrow over your sins, let yourself feel broken over the state of your life and how you've fallen short. Isn't that a strange concept, that when we're in godly sorrow, it's a good thing, a godly thing because it's bringing us to change moments, to repentance, to a new attitude, where we realize our need for Jesus the messiah.

## "God Our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:1-8 Ad Te Levavi 2024

Despite everything that had happened, how completely Israel had failed God. How they had prostituted themselves to foreign gods. How they had ignored God and his laws. How they had corrupted justice and mistreated the poor and needy, despite all that, despite all our sins, God says hold on, there's still a hope and a future here. Hold on, there's still a way for you, no matter how much evil you've done, there's still a way out of the wilderness and onto the high road of victory, it's in Jesus Christ the savior of the universe, if we will shut up, get out of our own way, finally surrender, let go of our pride, our ego, and put our trust in Jesus Christ and call out to Him, he will give us his own righteousness, and suddenly that impossibly high pit we'd fallen in, we find ourselves rescued, and out of the pit and on our way to heaven. Now we can always go back and jump in and often the enemies tries to tempt us, hey remember how cozy that muddy pit was, remember how there were no responsibilities and you could just sit there and feel sorry for yourself, so now as Christians, we must walk free from sin, in holiness ,in the fear of the Lord, knowing, that God expects us to walk as Jesus walked. God has become our righteousness, so now, we lives as slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18). Amen.