

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 6th December 2020

God's plan confirmed

Welcome to our service today. This is the season of advent when we prepare to remember the birth of Jesus as part of God's amazing plan for mankind when He sends His Son to be our saviour.

Isaiah 40: 10 -11

10. See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Song: O come, O come, Emmanuel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4

Prayer:

Father we rejoice that at this time of year as we prepare to remember the birth of your son Jesus. That He is the Sovereign Lord and the great Shepherd of the flock. We praise you and thank you for your faithfulness to us and yet we acknowledge that our lives fall short of your holiness and we ask for your forgiveness. We come now to offer you our worship and that your Spirit will speak to us and build us up in a greater love and knowledge of yourself and we ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen

Our next song reminds us that we can take everything to God In prayer.

Song: What a friend we have in Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLb96KDkJys>

Intercessory Prayer:

Romans 8: 34 "Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

Father we thank you that Jesus is an example to us as He intercedes for us. It is in His name we bring our petitions and requests.

Lord we pray that your church will be salt and light in a world that has turned away from you and we see culture seeking to squeeze the church into its mould. May Christians stand firm and proclaim the truth especially at this time of year.

Let us remember those in government, the scientists and medical people who are making decisions that protect people but also have serious economic consequences.

We ask that you will bless and encourage parents who feel under pressure as they care for their children.

We ask for your comfort for those who are lonely especially during this time of restrictions on our meeting together.

Take time to individually bring your own personal petitions and requests to the Lord,

Song: I do not know what lies ahead

We are reminded, “with God things don’t just happen, everything by Him is planned”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgA4UikB1N8>

Reading: Jeremiah 23: 1 – 8 The Righteous Branch

1. “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. 2. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the Lord. 3. “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. 4. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord. 5. The days are coming, declares the Lord, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6. 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 Righteousness. 7. “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,’ 8. but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord 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.”

Prayer:

Father we ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit you will open our eyes that we may see wonderful things in your Word. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

In this passage of scripture God sets the context for His plan and reveals His care for the Children of Israel. There are four aspects to this plan.

1. Ruthless Shepherds
2. Restoration of the Remnant
3. Righteousness
4. Recognition by the Children of Israel

Ruthless Shepherds

In verses 1 – 2 we read of shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep. These shepherds are rulers in both the church and state who fail to lead, feed and protect the sheep. They do not own the sheep but have the responsibility to care for them. Matthew Henry states. “Woe to those who are commanded to feed God’s people, and pretend to do it, but instead of that, scatter the sheep by their violence, oppression and failure to visit them.” Sadly we are seeing this in the church today “Shepherds” that are scattering the sheep. 2 Timothy 4: 3 -4 “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

We can therefore use this as a warning to us to be aware of ruthless shepherds that bring division in the church by their failure to preach the truth. We are seeing that there is an emphasis on applying scripture to suit the culture of our society rather than scripture shaping the way society operates. This brings a responsibility to us to defend the TRUTH as it says in Jude v 3, “I urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Restoration of the Remnant

In verses 3 – 4 we see that although the sheep are scattered a remnant still remains. The Lord is gracious to this group that He gathers for He states that they will be fruitful and increase in number. Not only that but caring shepherds will be watching over them so that they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any go missing. This is how a caring shepherd acts toward the sheep of his flock. It is interesting to note that

at the foretelling of the birth of Jesus that He is considered to be a good shepherd. In Isaiah 40: 11 “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart: he gently leads those that have young.” This is a real encouragement to us that there can be times when we feel that we are aliens in this world and we see the devastation caused by our adversary, Satan. We feel like a minority trying to stem the tide, nevertheless we have the GOOD SHEPHERD to guide us and He knows the plans for the future.

Righteousness

In verses 5 – 6 we read that the Lord, “will raise up to David a righteous Branch.” Also that, “The Lord is Our Righteousness.” What is righteousness? It is the quality of being right or just. It is used to denote attributes of God – His faithfulness, truthfulness that is consistent with His nature and promises. As part of God’s plan He will raise up a righteous Branch from the genealogy of David. This is the fulfilment of scripture with the birth of Jesus. We are told that Jesus will be called, The Lord Our Righteousness. Yes! Our righteousness will be found in Him. Sinners can therefore be saved from the consequences of our sin because of His Righteousness. Here Jeremiah is drawing our attention to a great blessing that Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.

Recognition by the Children of Israel

In verses 7 – 8 there is recognition by the children of Israel that it was the Lord who brought the descendants of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them and they will have their own land. Last week Robin mentioned the creation of the nation of Israel in 1948 that indeed was part of God’s plan and once again the fulfilment of scripture. Just as the Bible reveals God’s plan for mankind in sending His one and only Son to be our Saviour we need to give recognition to the way He has been our guide through our lives.

So we see in this passage from Jeremiah that God’s plan is confirmed with the establishment of a righteous Branch. That we can be encouraged that a Good Shepherd cares for the remnant and ruthless shepherds will be dealt with. The Sovereign Lord Reigns!

As we prepare for communion we remember that as part of God’s plan there is to be a redeemer and that is His Son Jesus Christ.

Song: There is a Redeemer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_YM_hYzcPo

Come to this sacred table, not because you must but because you may; come not to testify that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to be true disciples; come, not because you have any claim on heaven's rewards, but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and help.

As it says in 1 Corinthians 28: "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread or drinks of the cup."

Take a moment to undertake this.

Then follow the communion service on the YouTube link.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na33U_QaEGQ

Prayer:

Father thank you that we can remember your sacrificial death upon the cross for you paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins and that through that we can have the promise of eternal life.

Song: The price is paid

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB3-6yuqqhA>

Blessing The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you now and for evermore.
Amen