

Rogation Sunday

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 May 2023

Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Please be seated. In our Old Testament lesson, we read about God declaring that he will make a covenant of peace with his people.

This statement by God follows after a very harsh judgment on the corrupt leaders of Israel. Because of their laziness and the oppression of the people of Israel, they had been scattered to numerous places and became food for all the beasts of the field where they were scattered.

When the Gentile nations came against Israel, those who were supposed to be shepherds did not protect the flock from danger. This was not how it was supposed to be.

Israel was supposed to be a guide to the nations. And the priests of Israel were supposed to guide Israel in their purpose. In other words, God's most beloved people were the cause of their own destruction.

[1 : 13] What was supposed to be a glorious recreation of the world through the nation of Israel turned out to be a return to the chaos that existed before God created the world. When the earth was without form and void.

And because of this, God declared that he would be the one to search for the sheep who had been lost. God says in Ezekiel 34 verse 12, As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

The shepherd whom God chooses a new David shall feed them. In Ezekiel, the coming of that new David causes something radical. It completely reorients the way the world works.

When the Messiah comes, it will be accompanied by a new creation. God will make his people and the places around them a blessing. Israel's enemies will no longer do with them what they want. Even the natural created order begins to change. Instead of having to toil with the ground in order to eat from it, trees will always bloom and blossom with fruit the way that they are supposed to.

[2 : 34] The curse that was given to the ground when Adam transgressed will be removed. And the whole world will be in harmony again. Now after reading this, many of us may be wondering what on earth has gone wrong.

When we compare what we read in Ezekiel and what we see in the world, we recognize that they are not the same thing. There still seems to be people who take advantage of others, some from within the church and some from without.

It still seems that the reign of sin in the world is rampant. We still have enemies, we still have famine and drought, and we still deal with the consequences of our previous sins, both as individuals and as a community.

Our leaders have not always led us faithfully, and it seems that the true shepherd has not convinced us that the Lord is our God and we are his people. But remember the words of Christ from our gospel reading.

After Jesus tells the disciples that he has come from the Father and he is going back to him, they tell him that they have finally understood all of his confusing teaching that has been given to them.

[3 : 51] We understand, Lord, no one needs to question you anymore about what we see. We believe that you have come forth from God. But Jesus, knowing all too well that they don't completely understand, says, Do you now believe?

Indeed, the hour is coming. Yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave me alone. And yet, I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

Jesus tells them that they will not fully understand what he has been teaching them until his crucifixion and his resurrection. And this is exactly what happens. When Jesus visits the twelve after the resurrection, he declares to them, Peace be to you.

He is telling them that the covenant of peace that God promised to make with his people has finally come to them. When he breathes the Holy Spirit upon them, he starts his act of new creation, the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34.

[5 : 08] The Spirit was given to the apostles so that God's peace could be brought to the world through the darkness and the chaos that we experience today. Jesus commanded that baptism should be administered to make new disciples, the water that will cleanse people and make them a new creation.

His institution of the Eucharist was the fulfillment of God's promise to feed his sheep as the true shepherd. His priests carry with them the authority to forgive sins and bring people back to fellowship with God, a gathering of the scattered people in Ezekiel 34.

Friends, when it seems like the world throws too many things to handle our way, be of good cheer. Jesus told us that we are to be of good cheer when we experience tribulation in this world.

And why is that? Because Christ has overcome the world through his resurrection. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, working through the church, Christ is overcoming the world by his power. Let us rest upon him, the true shepherd, and live into our status as a new creation. Let us not be fearful of the world, but rest in the promise of the one who has overcome the world.

[6 : 30] We are a new creation, and God will not stop creating until all things have been made new. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.