

Study Guide for July 22, 2018

Readings: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 23; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34; 53-56.

Theme: A Picture of God

Sometimes when I read scripture I don't always see what others might see. Sometime I see Jesus when it's really about stuff I do. Other times I see myself when clearly it's not me but Jesus that the authors are writing about. This is not to say I am a narcissist or that my ego is so great that I believe the bible actually is about me. It's just that I read with a set of lenses that bring God's holy words to life in whatever mess I find myself in on any given day. I believe these passages speak directly about who Jesus is and what that means to the way we live our lives (in Christlikeness). I hope these words will form a picture of God in you that you haven't had before. Perhaps your idea of God will get bigger. And isn't that the goal for reading the bible, right?

Sunday's message speaks to this idea of seeing God, and allowing others to see and recognize God in us just as the world would come to recognize God in Jesus – the fulfillment of God's promise kingship. As Christ followers, we too should look at the ways we display our faith in our words and deeds. Do they ape society in all her problems, or mimic Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and lead people to God's grace and love?

Read: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Any text whose opening word is "Woe" is bound to get your attention, and make us wince a little as we prepare for the indictment and punishment that is bound to follow. This text forms the conclusion of a longer portion of Jeremiah's condemnation of Judah's corrupt monarchs. What starts out as "not so good news" the prophet tells us God will raise up a righteous ruler to lead his people. It's easy to see Jesus in this text. It's easy to hear his voice accusing the Pharisees of leading God's people astray. The "messianic" dimension of this prophecy stands as both a promise and challenge to today's church. Our hope and our lives are to be shaped by a God who is willing to break through our way of life that is hurting and enslaving others and usher in a king who will come to serve and not be served.

Q: When you read this text, in what ways do you see to reign and kingship of our Good Shepherd, Christ Jesus come alive?

Q: How would you define or design a church in this prophetic promise of God's?

Prayer: God, send me today your Spirit to lead me back to you where I can worship and follow the ways of my king and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Read: Ephesians 2:11-22

This is the passage I preached on last week when I spoke of being redesigned and reframed in Christ. After assuring his readers that their former state of disobedience and death has been transformed through Christ, Paul calls upon the churches of Ephesus to unite. He

describes the shocking nature of the church and the radical nature of life together. He reminds us that even though we may be different from each other, we are all united by faith in Jesus Christ who destroys the divisions between us and brings peace. Although there are great diversities of belief and practice among us, whether we like it or not, there is only one Body of Christ of which we are all part. We must therefore never lose sight of our unity in Christ—that in him, we are brothers and sisters with none more superior nor inferior to the other. We must not allow this vision of peace and reconciliation with God and with one another to be overshadowed by the things that divide us. Let us truly become the dwelling places for God that we are intended to be.

Q: What can we do in our daily lives to express our unity in Christ?

Q: Can you name the walls that you have put up in your life that have separated you from having a healthy Christlike relationship with others?

Q: Is there someone in your life that you feel like you need to reconcile with?

Prayer: Lord Christ, help me today to be closer to others in a way that will showcase the hospitality of our blessed God who dwells in me. Amen.

Read: Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

Bookending two more famous passages in Mark, this text seems almost small and insignificant, nothing more than acting as a transition from one miracle story to another. It begins with the 12 disciples returning from their missionary trip. They have become exhausted and need some time for themselves, and Jesus is encouraging them to acknowledge their human limitations. He seems to know if his disciples reach the point of burnout, they will no longer be able to continue their ministries and be of use to anyone. They must take a rest. But the people recognize them, and continue to seek them out for healing. It seems Jesus' reputation has preceded him. Typical of Jesus, he has compassion for them; like a shepherd tending to his flock. Everywhere they seem to go, these sheep recognize Jesus and are drawn to him. Why is that?

Q: In what ways is your busyness getting in the way of your rest?

Q: What is Jesus doing that would get people to notice?

Q: When people look at you, how do they see God who dwells in you?

Prayer: Lord God, to you I bring my weariness. Longing for peace and justice, hungry for your healing hand, I turn to my Good Shepherd to deliver me today. Amen.

Slow Read: Psalm 23. Use this famous psalm try to picture yourself as a sheep moving through the kingdom of God. How is God leading you? And how are you following?