

PRACTICE JUSTICE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 21

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 21:8-14

Key Verse: Thus says the Lord: See, I am setting before you the way of life. Jeremiah 21:8

Jeremiah 21:8-14 (NRSV)

8 And to this people you shall say: Thus says the Lord: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.

9 Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out and surrender to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have their lives as a prize of war.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good, says the Lord: it shall be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11 To the house of the king of Judah say: Hear the word of the Lord,

12 O house of David! Thus says the Lord: Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn, with no one to quench it, because of your evil doings.

13 See, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, O rock of the plain, says the Lord; you who say, "Who can come down against us, or who can enter our places of refuge?"

14 I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says the Lord; I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all that is around it.

WORD POWER!!!

- **Famine** – An extreme lack of food.
- **Pestilence** – Deadly disease.
- **Besiege** – To surround, lay siege to.
- **Devour** – To destructively consume.

GETTING READY!!!

Have you ever had to share bad news with someone? It is hard to share news that might hurt or not be popular with the people who have to receive it. However, we find the prophet Jeremiah in this situation in our lesson today. He had a message from God to share, and he did!

Throughout Jeremiah's life he faced challenges, but he never doubted God. When Jeremiah first started his ministry he was very young. He had doubts, but God soon told him, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb...I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jer. 1:5) As Jeremiah got older, the messages from God to the people did not get any easier. However, through it all, Jeremiah was obedient to what God told him to say and do. Jeremiah did not waver in telling the messages God wanted the people to hear.

Jeremiah's faithfulness to follow God even in tough situations is something we can see reflected throughout his life. God desires that all people are treated fairly. To commit to treating others justly in one's everyday life is important. Jeremiah is a prime example of how to be a worker of justice, called by God.

INTO GOD'S WORD!!!

In today's lesson, we find Jeremiah yet again with another difficult message to share. This timely message was towards King Zedekiah. King Z was put on the throne by King Nebuchadnezzar after one of King Z's victories. King "Neb" captured nation after nation and took the Jewish court, king and his family, army leaders, and everything else.

All while this was happening, King Z stayed faithful and listened to King Neb. However, the Jewish people were very distraught because in the midst of all this, false prophets arose, telling the people that they would be okay. However, Jeremiah knew that this was not true. The people had forgotten God, and this was their punishment. King Z got fed up with everything going on and decided to plan an attack against King Neb. Jeremiah wrote letters to the people telling them that the false prophets were not sent from God. In order to live, they must repent.

In an attempt to take control of the kingdom, King Z didn't listen to Jeremiah and began to make further plans to take over the kingdom. King Z called for Jeremiah, hoping for a word of hope. Instead, Jeremiah gave him a word of defeat. He told him to surrender. King Z did not heed Jeremiah's warning and was later captured and put to death.

Jeremiah tried to warn the people of Jerusalem that they could still choose to serve God and regain God's favor. They did not listen. Because of Israel's disobedience to God, they brought punishment to themselves. Jeremiah tried to help King

Z, but he too did not listen. God gave them many chances, but they decided not to follow God. This is a reminder to us that God does indeed care about us, but we too must play a part and follow what God tells us to do.

USING GOD'S WORD!!!

Can you remember a time when someone told you to listen, but you disobeyed? What was the outcome? Did you get in trouble? When a trusted adult tells us to listen and obey, it is usually for our good. Their life experience can help us not to make the same mistakes. Imagine a life with no rules or laws. It might seem that it would be lit, but actually it would not be great at all! There would be confusion, chaos, and in some instances, danger! We have rules at school, church, and in our community to keep us safe. Name one rule at school that keeps us safe. Name one rule at church that we abide by to honor God. Name one rule in your community that keeps you safe while walking, or riding your bike.

God has rules for our lives, too! We are called to follow God's laws and abide by what God tells us to do. It is up to us as good leaders to not only follow those rules but encourage others to do the same.

REMIX!!!

This story is a good reminder that we should not be dishonest. We are called to be people of truth. We must be careful of all our actions. When we are dishonest and lie, it affects not only us but others. God does not want us to

lie. God wants us to tell the truth and do what is right. So, the next time you think about doing or saying something that is not true, stop for a moment and think about the consequences. It is always better to tell the truth.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Jeremiah tell King Zedekiah to do?
2. Jeremiah was a faithful prophet of God. (True or False)
3. How do you think Jeremiah felt when he saw the people rejecting God?

PRAISE GOD!!!

Thank God that God gives us chance after chance to make things right. However, there are times when we do not listen to God and we do things our way. When we are disobedient, we disconnect from God. God is always there welcoming us back with open arms, but we must repent and try to do better. Thanks be to God whose love is everlasting. Thank you, God, for your grace and mercy that is always given to us every day!

CLOSING PRAYER

God, thank you for keeping your promises. Please forgive us when we have not obeyed your word. Help us to listen and make choices that are pleasing in your sight. Thank you, Lord, for loving us and remaining faithful to us each and every day. Remind us that you want us to trust you in all the areas of our lives. Amen.