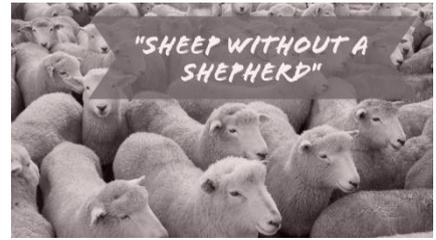


(Food for thought: Gospel: Mark 6:30-34.)



“Without a Shepherd”

The warning of Jeremiah, speaking on behalf of God, bemoans those "shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture. " The "shepherds" that Jeremiah is referring to are Israel's rulers. The nation's rulers, along with the priests and prophets, were supposed to play a role in helping the nation fulfil its vocation as God's people. Poor leadership had brought disaster to the nation, for when Jeremiah was writing these words, the Babylonian captivity had already begun. Eventually, the royal line would end and the nation would be taken into exile. Before it was over, Jerusalem and its temple would lie in ruins.

Despite the gloomy conditions that Jeremiah highlights among God's people, the reading has a breath of hope – and for this we can be grateful. While the rulers are blamed and threats are levelled against them, there is a promise for a brighter future. God will step in to "gather the remnant," to bring them back from exile. To accomplish this renewal, God promises to appoint shepherds who will fulfil their appointed office faithfully.

Our world needs healing and renewal. Each of us can play a part in this moment's potential for growth, by finding ways to speak to one another and to care for one another in His name. For only He can heal and renew what has been so wounded. Only He can help us face what divides and destroys our communal bonds. Only He can feed us and heal us so that we can face what

assails our lives as citizens and disciples, be witnesses to hope and continue to preach, teach and heal as He did.



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