

Monday

Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 53

Shortly after God first gave his people the Ten Commandments, they worshipped a god they had made for themselves in the form of a golden calf. But then the people repented of their sin, and God forgave them. Through the years, however, God's people often fell into the sin of idolatry. Then God sent special messengers called prophets to call them to repentance.

One of these prophets was Isaiah. He lived some seven hundred years before Jesus' birth. Still, by the power of God's Spirit, Isaiah wrote about Jesus – the Savior who would come to earn forgiveness for all sins, including the sin of idolatry. Isaiah described Jesus, writing about the very names by which Jesus would be called. These different names for Jesus tell us about him.

Here are a few:

- *Wonderful Counselor*. A counselor listens patiently and advises wisely. Sometimes counselors defend. And this counselor is wonderful.
- *Mighty God*. The word "mighty" speaks of his power as true God.
- *Everlasting Father*. A father protects his children, provides for them, and cares deeply about them. Everlasting means "never ending."
- *Prince of Peace*. A peaceful ruler brings contentment and well-being to his people.
- *Immanuel*. It means "God with us."

These names for Jesus tell us that he is a powerful God who protects us, cares for us, and listens patiently to us. He came from heaven to make us his own and to win salvation for us. He is a peaceful ruler who is and always will be with us. And best of all, he is God, our Savior.

Thank you, God, for giving us your name to call upon you in times of trouble. Help us to remember to give your name glory and respect, and forgive me when I mess up. In Jesus' holy name I pray, Amen.

Tuesday

Jeremiah 1:1–19, 23:5–6, 31:31–37

At the time Josiah was king of Judah, Jeremiah was growing up as the son of a priest named Hilkiah. While Jeremiah was still a young man, the Lord spoke to him. God told Jeremiah that even before he was born, God had planned for Jeremiah to be a prophet. God wanted Jeremiah to bring the Word of the Lord to his people and also to the people of other nations.

When the Lord first spoke to Jeremiah, he was surprised. Jeremiah did not think he would be a good prophet because he was too young. He said to the Lord, "I do not know how to speak."

But the Lord told Jeremiah not to think about how young he was, but to remember that it was God who was sending him. God did not want Jeremiah to be afraid, for he would be with Jeremiah. Then God said, "I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms."

God gave Jeremiah a sad message of judgment for the people of God. God was sending the nation of Babylon to conquer his people because of all the sin they had done. Jerusalem would be destroyed, and God's people would be taken away as prisoners to live in Babylon. But God also gave Jeremiah a message of hope for his people. After 70 years, God would bring his people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and to rebuild God's temple.

Even better, the Lord gave Jeremiah the great news of the promise that God would send someone who would be a perfect King for his people. He would rule wisely and with righteousness. "In his days," God promised through Jeremiah, "Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord our righteousness.'"

The Lord also told Jeremiah, "I will put my law within [my people], and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more."

Just as God promised through Jeremiah, the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem and took the people to Babylon. Just as God promised, the Israelites were allowed to return home to Jerusalem after 70 years. And just as God promised, he sent a perfect King for his people. God sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins on the cross, so that all who trust in him will know "The Lord is our righteousness."

- **When Jeremiah thought he was too young and couldn't tell other people what God says, how did God respond?**
- **Why did God allow the Babylonian army to conquer Jerusalem, and what did God promise would happen after 70 years?**
- **What is the greatest promise that God made to his people, and how does Jesus fulfill that promise?**

Close with prayer

Wednesday
1 Kings 18

After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel divided into two parts, and many of the people began to worship idols. They called one of the idols Baal. During the third year of a famine, God's prophet Elijah spoke before the people gathered at Mt. Carmel. He said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him. If Baal, then follow him. I am the only prophet of the Lord; yet there are 450 prophets of Baal. Give us two bulls. Let the prophets of Baal lay one bull on the wood of their altar, but place no fire under it. I will lay the other bull on the wood of the altar to God but not light any fire under it. Call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that sends fire, let him be recognized as the true God." The people agreed.

From morning until noon the prophets of Baal called for their idol to send fire. During the afternoon, they started to cut themselves until blood flowed, in hopes of gaining Baal's favor and attention.

Elijah took twelve stones (the same number as the tribes of Israel) and built an altar to God. Around the altar, he dug a trench. Then he laid the bull on the wood of the altar and drenched the sacrifice, the wood, and the altar with water until it filled the trenches. Elijah called on the name of the Lord: "Let it be known today that you are the Lord God and that you have turned their hearts back again."

Suddenly, fire from the Lord consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even the water that was in the trench! When the people saw what had happened, they said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." With these words, the people honored God's name. They praised God for his great and awesome goodness.

Dear Jesus, in baptism, you gave me your name as I was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for washing away my sins and for working in me so that I might glorify you and your name in all I do and say. Help me to keep your name holy. Amen.

WEEK TWENTY

Thursday

Do you know that people knew and wrote about Jesus hundreds of year before he was even born? The people God used to write these things are called prophets. Prophets received messages that God gave them and passed them on to God's people. God gave the prophets details about Jesus, and God wanted the prophets to share those details. So the prophets wrote that Jesus, the promised Savior, would be a descendant of David but would rule with even more wisdom, justice, and righteousness than any other king had ever done. This coming Savior would not only rescue his people from their oppressors but also reunite God's people.

Long ago, God chose to prepare the hearts of his people with the news that a Savior would come. Now, we know that Jesus came to suffer, to draw people to himself through repentance. But for many who knew the prophecies that the prophets had written, they expected Jesus to throw off the Romans who were ruling over everyone and unify the kingdom of Israel again.

By saving us from sin and Satan, Jesus saved us from things more important than the Romans. God said he would send a Savior to save us, and he did. Every detail that the prophets shared came true. God doesn't make promises that he can't keep.

From the time of the prophets, it took more than 500 years before God's promise was fulfilled. We might have to wait for God to keep his promises, but he always does. Jesus fulfilled God's promise. Now God promises to be with us, to love us and forgive us. And he promises to take us one day to heaven to be perfectly with forever. We might have to wait, but we know that God will keep that promise.

Dear God, thank you that we can trust you to always keep your promises. Thank you for sending Jesus to keep the greatest promise of all. In his name, Amen.

WEEK TWENTY – MINOR PROPHETS

Friday

We're going to finish a week of talking about prophets by learning a little bit more about some prophets that maybe you haven't heard of before.

The prophet Hosea wrote about the beautiful, unending, and uncompromising love of God. In Hosea, we meet a prophet who faithfully loved his unfaithful wife, Gomer, and even paid to win her back. Hosea points us to Jesus and the great price he paid to bring us back to himself.

Amos displays the depths of God's heart for the people of this world and his desire for people to love and trust him. In Amos, we meet a prophet who warned God's people, people who thought they were right with God though they lived unrighteously. Amos points us to Jesus, the Righteous One, whose perfect obedience is credited to us when we trust in him.

Jonah shows us that God loves all people and wants them to repent and be saved. In Jonah, we meet a prophet who failed to see other people with love and compassion like God sees them. Jonah points us to Jesus, who lovingly, compassionately, and willingly loved us and who gave up his life so that the whole world might be saved.

Habakkuk reminds us of God working all things for his glory and our good, even when it doesn't seem that way. In Habakkuk, we meet a prophet who struggled to make sense of God's ways—especially in difficult times—but eventually trusted God to rescue his people. Habakkuk points us to Jesus, who rescued God's people by being crucified on the cross—the most evil act in history.

Malachi speaks of God's faithfulness to his promises, even when his people disobey. In Malachi, we meet a prophet who warned God's people to get ready because a messenger—John the Baptist—was on his way. Malachi points us to the one of whom John spoke—Jesus, the final Messenger, who brought good news of salvation.

The prophets shared some of the most well-known and powerful promises of a Savior, such as; "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2), and "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). But those passages are not the only place we see Jesus in the short books written by the prophets. Those books of the Bible are not about the men after whom they are named; they are all about Jesus. Jesus is the hero of the Bible—cover to cover—and that includes the Minor Prophets.