

Friday 4 March 2022

Ezekiel 34: 1 - 12

34 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. 4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed those who are ill or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

7 “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

11 “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

As we join today with Christians around the world praying for the people of Myanmar who have been under a brutal military regime for over a year now, we reflect on the need for good leaders. We have seen how leaders, in all spheres of society, who put their own interest and prejudice at the fore can wreak havoc. There are so many countries around the world where dictators and even some “democratically” elected leaders rule the people with iron fists with little care for the people they should be serving. As the saying goes “Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

This has been an age old problem, when Israel first asked for a king (so that they could be like their neighbours) God warned them of the consequences but they would not listen. In Ezekiel’s time many centuries on, still the leaders of Israel seem only to be looking after themselves. God accuses them of lining their own pockets while their people suffer. God makes it clear, the work of a leader is to care for the people like a shepherd cares for his sheep – strengthen the weak, heal the ill, bind up the injured, search for the strays and the lost. Because these leaders have not done what they were supposed to God says he will remove them and he himself will care for his flock.

Today our focus is on prayer for our leaders. Take some extra time today to pray for your local leaders, community and government, as well as your national leaders. Ask for wisdom and guidance in their decisions. Ask for impartiality and honest and ethical behaviour. Ask that they may be good examples to the people they serve.

Then pray for governments around the world that we would see an end to all corruption, an end to dictatorships and military regimes. Pray that leaders would have a heart for their people.

And pray for yourself, in whatever role that you might be a leader: in your family, at work, at school, at church etc. That you may model Jesus' servant leadership and be an example to those that you lead.

Prayer:

Lord today we especially pray for the people of Myanmar,

We pray for an end to the hostile military regime

and that it will be replaced by a government who will look after the rights of its people.

We pray for an end to the violence against ethnic minorities

and that Myanmar will be a safe place to live for all.

We pray for safety for those who have and are protesting against the military government

and that all political prisoners will be released.

We pray for protection for the ordinary citizens trapped in the conflict between the military and the protesters.

We pray for freedom for all to live and practice their faith in peace.

We pray Lord for leaders in all positions, from local communities to world leaders,

We pray that they would use their power for good,

Protecting and serving the people under their care.

We pray that they would be good shepherds of your people

And hold themselves accountable to you.

We pray for an end to all corruption, to all destructive and selfish regimes,

And open, free and honest governments in their place.

We pray this in Jesus name,

Amen.

Rev KS Brown