

**Occasion:** First Sunday in Advent (C)

**Date:** 11-29-2009

**Text:** Jeremiah 33:14-16

**Title:** The "Right" King

### **Introduction:**

According to the latest Gallup Poll ([www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)), as of November 28, 2009, 49% of Americans approve of the president's handling of his job and 42% of Americans disapprove. For Congress, the numbers are considerably one sided: 26% of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing, while 68% disapprove. As to the Economic Outlook for the Country, 35% of Americans think the economy is getting better, while 60% think it is getting worse. According to a Rasmussen Poll ([www.rasmussenreports.com](http://www.rasmussenreports.com)), as of November 25, 2009, 31% of Americans think the Country is heading in the Right Direction, while 64% think the Country is on the Wrong Track.

I share this information with you, not because I want to discuss politics or current issues and policies, but to illustrate the simple fact that no matter which political party is in power, job approval ratings just do not reach the 90% or better level. Certainly no political leader has even had a 100% job approval rating.

Humanly speaking, it is impossible for any leader to have a 100% approval rating because no clear, concise, consensus exists among the people for evaluating the success or failure of any leader. A conservative will use one set of criteria to evaluate a leader, while a liberal or a moderate will use another. A capitalist will use one set of criteria to evaluate a leader, while a socialist, a fascist, or a communist will use another.

As we live in a world that has turned away from the sovereign rule of its Creator, is it any wonder that we cannot find satisfaction in any human leader or any political party or any economic system?

### **Setting:**

During the time of the prophet Jeremiah, there were no Gallup polls, no Rasmussen polls. Yet, one particular poll was most important! This poll was rather easy to conduct and the results very straightforward and most important for any ruler! One vote and only one vote counted! The poll was not taken of the people. This poll was taken of God's approval or God's disapproval. This poll was whether God thought the king was heading in the right direction or was on the wrong track. God had His vote reported to the king through His appointed prophets. If the king wanted to know God's current view, he had only to seek out God's prophet of the day for an update.

## **I. THE UNRIGHTEOUS LEADERS OF MANKIND:**

The prophet Jeremiah had the unenviable task to taking God's "disapproval" rating to the king. Jeremiah tells us in his book:

<sup>1</sup>This is what the LORD says: "Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there:

<sup>2</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah,  
you who sit on David's throne—  
you, your officials and your people who come through these gates.

<sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD says:

Do what is just and right.  
Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed.  
Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow,  
and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

<sup>4</sup>For if you are careful to carry out these commands,  
then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this  
palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and  
their people.

<sup>5</sup>But if you do not obey these commands, declares the LORD,  
I swear by Myself that this palace will become a ruin.'" – *Jeremiah 22:1-5*

The bad news for the king, Zedekiah, was that he had a 100% disapproval rating from God. In case you don't know – that's BAD! That's not what any king wants to hear! The good news for king Zedekiah was that God offered him the opportunity to change the disapproval rating he had received from God. The bad news for king Zedekiah was that if he did nothing to change God's disapproval rating, his palace would become a ruin, not to mention his own life. The good news for king Zedekiah was that if he did change, if he did repent of his evil ways and if he did seek justice and righteousness in his rule, then God would bless him and his descendants.

So, what would it be? Would king Zedekiah seek God's approval, or would he continue in God's disapproval? What would be the wise thing to do?

So, what did king Zedekiah do? Guess!

As went the king, so went the nation! The Babylonians defeated Judah and Jerusalem, and the survivors of the war were taken into exile.

In a monarchy, you're stuck with your king. There's no election, no term of office to end, no impeachment. You're stuck with your king. In a democracy, you can wait until the next election, you can wait until the term of office ends, or, in the worst case

scenario, you can impeach a really dishonest or demented leader. Yet, in a democracy, how much the worse, if an ungodly leader is put into office by an ungodly electorate.

## II. THE HOPE OF THE "RIGHTEOUS BRANCH":

What mankind needs most is a leader who has a 100% approval rating, not from the people, but from God! What a blessing that would be! What human leader could live up to such a standard? In a democracy, could a nation of corrupt and selfish sinners elect or even accept such a leader? Could a righteous leader govern a corrupt nation?

God has promised such a righteous leader for His people. This king is a descendant of kings – His blood is royal! This king is anointed by God to rule over God's people! While God appointed the prophet Jeremiah to speak against the sins of the kings of Judah, God also spoke through Jeremiah to foretell of the righteous King Who would rule over God's people forever.

<sup>14</sup>"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; He will do what is just and right in the land. – *Jeremiah 33:14-15*

That's what Christmas is all about! That's why we celebrate the birth of Jesus! He is the One King, Who has a 100% approval rating from God! He is the One King, Who meets the standard set, not by corrupt man, but by the holy and righteous God. While human leaders fail us because they are corrupted by sin, God's people look forward to being ruled forever by the King Who will do what is just and right forever.

But a righteous King cannot govern a corrupt people. Such people would not accept His righteous ways. Even if the righteous King imposed by force His laws upon the people, in their hearts they would resent Him, and in their lives they would not fully or completely obey them. At best, there would only be an outward appearance of service to the righteous King. The reality would be that the people remained corrupt. That is not the Kingdom God is sending His Son to rule over forever.

No! The righteous King must rule over a righteous people. God spoke of such a people also through the prophet Jeremiah.

<sup>31</sup>"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the Covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My Covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>"This is the Covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I

will be their God, and they will be My people. <sup>34</sup>No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." – *Jeremiah 31:31-34*

The righteous King has come, and He has lived a righteous life under God's Law, and He has borne upon Himself the guilt of man's sin that He might declare a royal pardon for all those who come to Him and seek His mercy and that He might declare those who come to Him as righteous, imparting His righteousness to them. Thus, the righteous King will rule a righteous people – a people who will lovingly and willingly submit to the rule of the righteous King, from within, from their hearts, made new and empowered by God's Spirit. That is why Jeremiah wrote of those people in the Old Testament Lesson:

<sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which she will be called: 'The LORD Our Righteousness.' – *Jeremiah 33:16*

The righteous King will rule over a righteous people, a people devoted to Him as they have been redeemed by His blood to be His own forever.

## Conclusion:

Christmas is the celebration of God's fulfillment of His promise to send the righteous King to redeem a people and make them righteous. As you prepare to celebrate Christmas again, what are you preparing for the celebration? Are you preparing a house with decorations? Are you preparing a home with baked goods and sweets? Are you preparing for Christmas, buying gifts to give to family members and friends?

What is most fitting and proper for the celebration of the birth of the righteous King? In the Epistle Lesson, the apostle Paul offered a prayer on behalf of the Thessalonian Christians that is most fitting for God's people today: (*1 Thessalonians 3:13*)

<sup>13</sup>May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

God's people prepare not only for the celebration of the birth of the righteous King, but for the coming again of the righteous King with all the souls of those made righteous by His blood throughout history. God's people prepare for that Great Day with hearts that lovingly and willingly submit to the righteous King even now, as they live new lives, righteous lives, in faith and love.

Are you ready to meet the righteous King? Have you received His royal pardon for all your sin? Have you been declared righteous by Him, receiving the credit for the righteous life He lived for you? Do you daily submit to His righteous rule, letting His Spirit guide and empower you in righteous living? AMEN