

Do you ever try to sneak wearing dirty clothes past the eyes and nose of your mom? Let's close our eyes and picture our very favorite outfit. What would those clothes look like if you wore them EVERY day for a year? What would be on them? How would they smell? Would anyone want to sit next to you? Probably the only person who come close to you would be your mom/dad/loved one who would hold their nose and make this face (*demonstrate face*) while they kissed your cheek.

Today we're talking about righteousness. Say that word with me. Righteousness. Righteousness is a big word meaning free from guilt or sin. The name of God we're discussing this week is Jehovah-tsidkenu (*pronounced tsid-ke-noo*), which means the Lord our righteousness. Because this is a name for God, we also know it is His nature. We see the promise of knowing His name and His nature in Psalm 9:10: Those who know your name will trust in you for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who trust you. We see this name at a time in the Bible when the Israelites were the opposite of righteous. A king named Zedekiah was in power for 11 years. In those 11 years he encouraged people to turn away from God and, of course, that leads to turning toward sin. They were worshipping stone statues with the love and attitude they should have worshipped the one true God. They were killing people they should have loved. God's heart was angered because they were acting and thinking in ways that hurt themselves and everyone around them. The Israelites were DEEP in the stinky, disgusting grime of guilt and sin. If their clothes revealed their amount of sin, they would be nastier than you or I can imagine.

But here's where we see the first mention of God as Jehovah-tsidkenu. Jeremiah was a prophet, so God was telling Jeremiah what to preach to the Israelites. In the book of the Bible named for him, Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 5 and 6, God uses Jeremiah to tell the people this: "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior."

The Hebrew word here for Lord is Jehovah-tsidkenu.

[Use your judgment on whether your kids are old enough to understand this paragraph. If not, skip to the next one.] Let's go through these verses slowly so we can really understand what they mean. The first part when God says He will raise up for David a righteous Branch, let's remember what we can about David. (*shepherd chosen to be king, a man after God's own heart, etc.*) God made a promise to David that one of his family members would establish a kingdom that would reign forever. Have you ever made a family tree? The branches are the different generations in the same family. When we hear the word Branch or Root in the Bible, it's a clue that it's a reference to Jesus. Abraham and David were in the same family as Jesus, just generations before Him. The next part of the verse describes this King reigning wisely, doing what is just and right, and saving people. Does that describe what we know about Jesus? Yes!

When Jeremiah talks about the Lord our Righteous Savior, he is saying one day Jesus will come. Jesus is the only person who has ever walked on the earth and never sinned. What was our definition of righteousness? (free from guilt or sin) Jesus was righteous—free from guilt and sin—but when He chose to die on the cross, He put on all of our sin and paid the penalty for all of it. He rose again and is now in heaven, and He offers us His righteousness. If we picture our hearts like the clothes we talked about wearing for a year, our sins add up to make us dirty, smelly, and disgusting. When we ask Jesus to forgive us, He does more than just washes our hearts clean. His name Jehovah-tsidkenu means He takes His own pure white righteousness and wraps us up in it. It feels to our hearts like being wrapped in the softest, cleanest blanket. When God looks at us, He doesn't see us as being covered in dirty sin. He sees us dressed in Jesus' righteousness. That's why He pulls us close when we come to Him in prayer or worship, even though He is holy and we, on our own, are not.

Jesus offers His righteousness to everyone. There's no one who has sinned too much or gone too far from Jesus' reach. Let's pray together.