

I.N.I.

First Sunday in Advent
Dec. 2, 2012
Jeremiah 33:14-16

In Christ Jesus, for whose coming we prepare our hearts during this Advent season, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I am sure many of you have heard the old saying, “The only things sure in life are death and taxes.” Well we can add a much happier thing to that list and that is this: God’s promises! God’s promises are the most sure and certain things there are in this life and this morning’s text tells us that.

The prophet Jeremiah had a long ministry, lasting through the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the people of Judah into captivity in Babylon. He remained in Jerusalem after the deportation.

Although he was a prophet to the nations, his primary focus was on Judah. These were times of catastrophe and judgment for Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been swallowed up by the previous world empire Assyria. Babylon had now taken her place as a world power, and since the people of Judah did not learn from Israel and continued in rebellion and unbelief, God used Babylon to carry out His judgment upon His unfaithful people.

However in His grace, God promised that the captivity would last only 70 years and the Israelites would be allowed to return to Judah and to rebuild Jerusalem. This had to happen for the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah, the Savior to be born in Bethlehem.

The LORD through Jeremiah talks about “the days (that) are coming.” From our text we see that these days fit in well with our Advent worship for they are speaking of both Christ’s first coming as a little baby in human form and again His second coming to bring redemption to all believers.

Our theme this morning is this:

**BEHOLD YOUR KING, THE BRANCH OF DAVID!
I: HE COMES TO FULFILL A GRACIOUS PROMISE**

We read again vs. 14: **BEHOLD, THE DAYS ARE COMING,' SAYS THE LORD, 'THAT I WILL PERFORM THAT GOOD THING WHICH I HAVE PROMISED TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND TO THE HOUSE OF JUDAH:**

This verse emphasizes the certainty of the fulfillment of God’s promise. He does not take His promises lightly. He made a unilateral covenant with His people and He can be counted on to be faithful to His promise, even if His people have broken faith with Him. This promise is of restoration. Restoration back to Judah as a people and a nation, but even more importantly restoration as His people under a new and better King than David--David’s greatest Son, Jesus!

Twelve times in Jeremiah the statement “**The days are coming**” is made. In every case it expressed certainty! In some cases it meant the certainty of God’s Judgment and the captivity. In other sections it meant the certainty of Judah’s return from captivity. In this case it means the certainty of the King from David’s line coming. This is not an empty expression that indicates God may or may not do something, but there is a definite time in mind and it will come to pass.

I WILL PERFORM THAT GOOD THING WHICH I HAVE PROMISED; “I will fulfill the gracious promise that I made,” declares the Lord. These are not just some idle words spoken, this is a declaration from God. It has been declared for all to hear and God cannot and will not try to wiggle out of them or deny that He spoke them. He will fulfill them for all the world to see.

Do you know now why God says to not put your confidence and trust in people, be they politicians, presidents, pastors, professors, parents or whomever. God alone fulfills all of His promises He makes!

His promises also are not vague and unclear. They are fulfilled through the Branch of Righteousness from David’s line.

Some years earlier Isaiah introduced this Branch to God’s people. We read in Isaiah 4:2: **IN THAT DAY THE BRANCH OF THE LORD SHALL BE BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS;** and

also in Isaiah 11:1-2: **THERE SHALL COME FORTH A ROD FROM THE STEM OF JESSE, AND A BRANCH SHALL GROW OUT OF HIS ROOTS.**

The physical lineage of David had been cut down, like a tree. There were no more kings reigning in Judah, but a shoot will come forth from that stump and a Branch will grow. Jeremiah mentions it here in our text and earlier in chapter 23. Zechariah speaks of this Branch in 3:8 and 6:12: **HEAR, O JOSHUA, THE HIGH PRIEST, YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS WHO SIT BEFORE YOU, FOR THEY ARE A WONDROUS SIGN; FOR BEHOLD, I AM BRINGING FORTH MY SERVANT THE BRANCH ...THEN SPEAK TO HIM, SAYING, 'THUS SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS, SAYING: "BEHOLD, THE MAN WHOSE NAME IS THE BRANCH! FROM HIS PLACE HE SHALL BRANCH OUT, AND HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD.** The Israelites knew this Man named Branch, to be the coming Messiah. We know Him to be Jesus, the Christ.

The Lord God has fulfilled His gracious promise of redemption and salvation through His Son, Jesus. We see that in our second point:

II: HE BRINGS US GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jesus alone can bring righteousness to sinful mankind. He alone kept God's Law as God demanded it to be kept. God demands of you and me perfect obedience in thought, word and deed. How we all must shamefully bow our heads and cast down our eyes before our Creator acknowledging our many, many sins in word and action. We cannot deny them. Others can see them. How embarrassed we would all be if God revealed our sinful thoughts to the world. God condemns us for our sinful thoughts, words and actions.

That is why repentance is the proper way to prepare for Advent; for the Lord's coming. We confess our sins and our own unworthiness and we see in Jesus our righteousness.

Jesus' perfect life and His atoning death satisfied God's justice and brings righteousness to all of us. It is His vicarious righteousness—His for us, He earned it for us and now through faith it is ours! Without it we are not saved.

That is the picture of our last verse. Even as a strong king can protect his people from enemy nations so our Messiah-King, the Branch delivers us, His people, from all our enemies, sin, death, Satan and hell. He is our eternal refuge!

Did you notice the last verse of our text especially the last line? It reads: **IN THOSE DAYS JUDAH WILL BE SAVED, AND JERUSALEM WILL DWELL SAFELY. AND THIS IS THE NAME BY WHICH SHE WILL BE CALLED: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'**

Is that a mistake? We read in Jer. 23:6: **IN HIS DAYS JUDAH WILL BE SAVED, AND ISRAEL WILL DWELL SAFELY; NOW THIS IS HIS NAME BY WHICH HE WILL BE CALLED: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Did someone copy the wrong pronoun?

No! Even as God the Father calls His Son, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, so because of the Messiah's rule in our hearts through faith, the Father calls us the same. It makes perfectly good sense to call Christ's people whom He rules, by His name. For through Him alone we have attained His righteousness before the Father.

The Apostle Paul identifies the Church of all believers with Christ in I Cor. 12:12: **FOR AS THE BODY IS ONE AND HAS MANY MEMBERS, BUT ALL THE MEMBERS OF THAT ONE BODY, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY, SO ALSO IS CHRIST.** He also writes in his second letter to the Corinthians: **FOR HE (GOD) MADE HIM (JESUS) WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.**

Our text, together with the words of our Savior from our Gospel reading in Luke does a good job of reminding us in this Advent season that we are a Church in waiting, a Church in preparation for what is yet to come. The heart and core of our faith is what has happened. The great work of our salvation, the fulfillment of God's promise in sending His Son to be our righteousness through His perfect life and sacrificial death upon the cross.

But we also are to look ahead, to look forward to the fulfillment of God's promise that Christ will come again and we will receive the eternal outcome of the Lord's deliverance. The Lord's gracious promise extends beyond Calvary's cross, beyond the empty tomb to the eternal banquet with the Lamb!

Yes, Jesus declared **“IT IS FINISHED!”** on the cross to show that all that was needed for our salvation was done. But the Savior’s work will not be complete until all the believers are safe in their eternal home. We as His Church, His people, wait in eager anticipation for that final act of deliverance.

There is therefore the absolute need to be ready, to be prepared and to treasure the grace that our God still grants us, to realize that in this gracious promise of our heavenly Father alone lies our only hope for salvation.

On that great and glorious last day we will

**BEHOLD OUR KING, THE BRANCH OF DAVID,
WHO BRINGS US GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS!**

Amen.