

Sermon for November 28, 2021 – Advent 1

Jeremiah 33:14-16 EHV

Theme: **Better Days Are Coming!**

- 1) They started when Jesus was born in humility.
- 2) They are coming when Christ returns in glory.

*<sup>14</sup>Listen, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the good promises that I have spoken to the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to grow up from David's line. He will establish justice and righteousness on earth. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. This is what she will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*

Are you feeling glum? If so, you are not alone. Aside from the seasonal cause for our feelings (like colder days with less sunlight), we are still in year two of a pandemic that just won't go away. Natural disasters are putting pressure on supply chains—making things more expensive. Armed conflicts are breaking out in various places around the world. Our society seems to be getting even more godless (if that were possible). Add to these things all the personal problems we may have regarding our health, finances, and relationships, and I can understand why you might feel morose.

Here is the truth about these evils: they are all a result of sin. God allows these trials to discipline humanity. For some, they are a rebuke and call to repentance. For others, they are judgement. For us Christians, however, they strengthen us in our faith. All the bad things we face remind us that *the world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.*<sup>i</sup>

However, even though it seems as if the world is going to hell in a handbasket, the LORD does not leave Christians without hope. With the prophet Jeremiah as our guide, let us consider God's great Advent promise under the theme: **Better Days are coming!** 1) They started when Jesus was born in humility. 2) They are coming when Christ returns in glory.

Part One: They started when Jesus was born in humility.

Our sermon text is part of a series of prophecies recorded by Jeremiah. If you think our present era is bad, spend some time reading his books (Jeremiah and Lamentations), and you will see that we have it pretty good. When Jeremiah received this prophecy, he was under locked guard as a political prisoner for speaking the truth about God. Jerusalem was under siege, and the city was going to fall. The people would lose their freedom and all they owned. Many would even lose their lives. Why? Because they refused to listen to God and repent. They lusted after the things of this world instead of the LORD. They thought it was ok to worship other gods alongside Him. Yes, God's people faced great disaster for their impenitence, but the LORD would not leave them without hope.

After warning the people about the destruction Jerusalem would undergo, the LORD promises:

*But watch! I will bring it health and healing. I will heal them and reveal an abundance of peace and truth to them. I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and I will build them up as they were in the beginning. I will cleanse them from all the guilt they incurred by sinning against me.<sup>ii</sup>*

What is the LORD promising here? Far more than the people's return from Babylonian captivity. The LORD promises his people forgiveness and salvation from their sins—something that only the promised Messiah could accomplish.

Do you see the similarities between Judah's situation and our own? Life is hard. Our sins have made it this way. Those of you studying Revelation with me have seen how the LORD promised to send disasters upon this earth as Judgement Day draws near. Just as a person can tell when the seasons are about to change from the signs God places in nature<sup>iii</sup>, we Christians can tell that Christ is coming soon. How so? By observing what's going on in the world and comparing it with Scripture.<sup>iv</sup>

And, just as it was hard for believers in Jeremiah's day to cope with all the evil happening around them, so it is difficult for us. Therefore, we need to take to heart the promise God gave his Old Testament people that better days are coming.

<sup>14</sup>*Listen, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the good promises that I have spoken to the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah.*

Yes, even though we may feel God's wrath being executed around us, He will fulfil all the merciful promises He gave his people throughout time. What are these promises? Consider the petitions of the Lord's prayer - for every one of them is based upon a promise God gives us in Christ. God will deliver us from evil, forgive our sins, give us everything we need for our body and life, and, among many other things, establish his Kingdom of grace. Our text continues:

<sup>15</sup>*In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to grow up from David's line. He will establish justice and righteousness on earth.*

Jeremiah perceived that the armies of Babylon were about to cut down David's great dynasty—making it appear as if it would never rise again. But, as the LORD also promised through Isaiah decades earlier: *A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.<sup>v</sup>*

Jeremiah calls this branch from David's line "righteous." He only does what is good and right. And not only would he do what is good and right, but he would also establish these things upon the earth.

But how could anyone accomplish such a thing? A quick glance at my internet news feed is enough to convince me that this world seems irredeemable. Whitewashed greed and selfishness permeate human nature. How could righteousness ever be established on earth?

It can only be established if the great descendant of David could merit the divine righteousness no sinful human could attain. And not only would he need to do it for himself, but for us as well.

And this is exactly what Jesus came to do! Yes, Jesus, whose birth we are about to celebrate, is the one who would establish justice and righteousness on this earth. How would he do that? As true God and true man, he would live his life in perfect obedience to the LORD's law—revealing himself as totally righteous. More than that, he would offer this righteousness to everyone as a gift to be received through faith. Jesus would also take our sins upon himself—fulfilling God's demand for justice by suffering and dying for our guilt on the cross. Yes, through repentance and faith in Him, Jesus forgives all our sins and covers us with His righteousness. He has done this to such a degree that, whenever God the Father looks at us, He sees His Son and loves us as such.

Do you remember me mentioning the source of all the problems we face on this earth? They all result from sin. But if sin is forgiven, then what? Then better days have already come! How so? Because we know that, regardless of how bad things get on this earth, we are at peace with God in Jesus. Our future is secure.

Part Two: They are coming when Christ returns in glory.

*<sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.*

Yes, even now, the Church (God's New Testament Jerusalem) lives securely. "Live securely?" you might wonder, "How can this be with all that is going on around us?" We live securely because the LORD himself promises to watch over us. His Word says:

*One who lives in the shelter of the Most High will stay in the shadow of the Almighty.  
<sup>5</sup>You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup>nor the plague that prowls in the darkness, nor the pestilence that destroys at noon. If you make the Most High your shelter, <sup>10</sup>evil will not overtake you. Disaster will not come near your tent.  
<sup>11</sup>Yes, he will give a command to his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.<sup>vi</sup>*

And even if we fall victim to some great earthly evil, God promises to use it for our eternal good.<sup>vii</sup> Even the greatest evil of all—death—must serve a good purpose for the believer: granting us peace and rest as we await the resurrection of the dead.<sup>viii</sup>

Yes, because Jesus came at Christmas, we are already experiencing better days through faith in Him. We don't have to worry and fret like the unbelieving world. We put our faith in God—trusting that he is fulfilling his promise to come again. And we prepare for His coming through repentance—letting go of the world and clinging to what Christ has won for us.

And what, exactly, has Christ won for us? Righteousness - as the last verse of our text shows:

*This is what she will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*

Let me take a moment to explain this verse. Earlier in his book, Jeremiah made a very similar prophecy about Jesus, with one exception. In that prophecy, Jeremiah called the coming Christ “the LORD Our Righteousness.” In this prophecy, Jerusalem (the Church) is called by that name. Do you understand the reason? It’s because Jesus clothes us with His righteousness by faith to such a degree that when God looks at us, He sees Jesus.<sup>ix</sup>

The LORD is our Righteousness. He is the reason we can stand before God. Because He sealed us as His own through Holy Baptism, we can rest assured that better days are coming--everlasting days of peace, joy, and happiness. All that causes sorrow will be gone, as the LORD promised through the prophet Isaiah:

*<sup>17</sup>Watch this! I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered. They will not come to mind. <sup>18</sup>Instead, rejoice and celebrate forever, because of what I am creating. Watch this! I am about to create Jerusalem to be a source of gladness, and her people will be a source of joy. <sup>19</sup>I also will be glad because of Jerusalem, and I will rejoice over my people. The sound of weeping will not be heard in her again, nor will the sound of crying.<sup>x</sup>*

Yes, better days are coming with Christ. Their dawning began with the birth of Jesus as our Saviour. And we will fully realize them when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Because the everlasting glory of those days will far outweigh all the evils we presently experience<sup>xi</sup>, let us do what Jesus bids us do in these end times. Let us lift our heads in joyful anticipation because we know that our redemption is drawing near.<sup>xii</sup>

*The one who testifies about these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.<sup>xiii</sup>*

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<sup>i</sup> 1 John 2:17 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> Jeremiah 33:6-8a EHV

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Matthew 16:2ff

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Luke 21:1-28

<sup>v</sup> Isaiah 11:1 EHV

<sup>vi</sup> Psalm 91 (select verses) EHV

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:28

<sup>viii</sup> Cf. Isaiah 57:1-2

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Galatians 3:26-27

<sup>x</sup> Isaiah 65:17-19

<sup>xi</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Luke 21:28

<sup>xiii</sup> Revelation 22:20-21 EHV