

November 28, 2021  
First Sunday in Advent  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (Luke 19:28-40; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

## THE LORD IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the prophesy of Jeremiah, the thirty-third chapter, which you heard read earlier.

This past Friday was the official kick-off of the secular Christmas season. We live in a culture of pleasure and the pursuit of excess. Many will cram five or six weeks' worth of shopping and celebration into the next four weeks. By the time Christmas Eve comes, the season that is supposed to be all about comfort and joy, for many is neither comfortable nor joyous. They are exhausted with Christmas. After weeks of Christmas carols and celebrations, they are ready to sing *Silent Night* and be done with it for another year.

While the world is racing toward the tree on Christmas morning, the Church Calendar pulls back on the reins and shouts: "*Slow down. Let's take our time. This season is not about us. It's all about Jesus.*" It tells us that the season of Christmas doesn't arrive until December 24th after the sun goes down. We first celebrate the season of *Advent*, which marks the beginning of a new Church Year. The word *Advent* is the Latin word meaning *coming*. It is a penitential season of repentance and faith so that we might be prepared and patiently await the *coming* of our Lord.

Waiting for Christ to return is difficult. Especially when the world is in turmoil and you are suffering from trial and tribulation in your life. But God works according to His time schedule, not ours, so we wait patiently. Way back, almost at the beginning of history, God's people were taught to wait patiently for the salvation of the Lord. (Psalm 27:14, 37:7)

Shortly after the fall into sin, the Lord God promised Eve in the Garden of Eden that her seed, her offspring would come to crush the head of the serpent who had deceived her into sinning. (cf: Genesis 3:15) Generation after generation waited in eager anticipation of the coming of that Savior. But just as you and I often do, many became impatient, gave up waiting, and turned to doing whatever was right in their own eyes. (cf: Judges 17:6; 21:25)

God's prophet Jeremiah knew something about waiting. God called him to speak His Word at a time when His people resented God's messengers and His message. Jeremiah had the unfortunate job of warning the people of Israel and Judah of their sin, putting them on notice that if they continued to reject God, they'd be destroyed by Assyria and Babylon. But the people didn't pay

attention to the Word of the Lord. They turned their backs on God while offering up their sons and daughters as burnt offerings to false gods. (cf: Jeremiah 32:33–35)

God kept His word. Jerusalem was attacked. And Jeremiah was thrown into prison by the king of Judah for prophesying against him. (cf: Jeremiah 32:2-5) If being imprisoned in the middle of a foreign invasion wasn't bad enough, the Lord God called to Jeremiah again to speak His word of judgement. Their situation was going to get a lot worse before it got better. (cf: Jeremiah 33:5-9) But, indeed, it would get better. The Lord God promised that even though Jerusalem and most of her people would be destroyed, His steadfast love endures forever. He promised that He would restore the fortunes of the land saying:

***"<sup>14</sup> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'*"** (Jeremiah 33:14–16)

All of Jeremiah's prophesy came true. At first, it got a lot worse. God removed His hand of protection from Jerusalem and its people because of their evil. Jerusalem was sacked and those who survived were deported, but not Jeremiah. He was once again imprisoned in Jerusalem and after being rescued, he would be taken to Egypt by force where he would spend his remaining days declaring the word of the Lord. (cf: Jeremiah 38:1-13, 43:5-6)

Jeremiah's days were dark and lonely, but he waited patiently for the Lord. All he had was God's promise spoken by his very own lips that a righteous branch would spring up for David bringing justice and righteousness to the land. He didn't live to see God's promise fulfilled. Tradition says Jeremiah was stoned to death by the people of the Jewish exile in Egypt. But like so many of God's people before him, he died with faith, trusting in God's promise.

It would be almost six centuries later when the Righteousness Branch would spring up in the womb of the Virgin Mary. His name is The Lord is our Righteousness, born to the house of David, fulfilling the Lord God's promise to David nine centuries earlier that his descendant would sit on the throne rule for all eternity. (cf: 2 Samuel 7:16)

The parallels between Jeremiah's days and yours are similar. You, too, have God's promise that the Righteous Branch will return and restore all things. Your life might not be as arduous and long-suffering as the prophet Jeremiah's, but you know what it is to wait anxiously, waiting tirelessly for a promise given long ago.

Similar to Jeremiah, you live in pain, suffering, and turmoil. Your body is falling apart. Your relationships are strained. And our nation seems to be tearing at the seams. While you talk a good Christian talk, your sins in thought, word, and deed condemn you before God. And if that isn't enough, you're dying from the disease of original sin passed through the generations from Adam and Eve.

The signs of the End Times are more and more apparent today: wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters. But as we heard in the last few weeks, these are but the beginning of the birth pains, so stay awake and be on your guard. (cf: Mark 13:8–9) Every day, believers become impatient and turn away from faith in God and trust in the things of this world which will fade and pass away. They give up on God and do whatever is right in their own eyes, indulging in the pleasures of the world and of the flesh. But just like Jeremiah, you and I wait in eager anticipation. We wait in contrition and repentance. We await His coming on the Last Day.

There's one huge difference, though, between Jeremiah's day and ours today. You and I are living in the days that Jeremiah longed to see. Jeremiah longed for the days when God's plan of restoration and salvation would move forward, when the promise would be kept, and mankind would be saved. Jeremiah had the promise. You *have* the promise fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

While much of the world is anticipating the many purchases and celebrations they'll experience before Christmas morning, the season of Advent anticipates more. Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem in our Gospel text this morning points us to the reason the Righteous Branch was born of the virgin Mary. Jesus was born to die. The manger means nothing without the cross. The manger is only one point along the timeline of Jesus incarnation and His work of salvation. His work would climax and be completed in Jerusalem on the cross.

The Righteous Branch sprung up in Bethlehem to bring righteousness and salvation to all mankind. He's the shoot from the stump of Jesse, the Branch that bears abundant fruit for mankind. (cf: Isaiah 11:1) He's the Branch that was nailed upon the tree of the Cross where He became the Tree of Life that gives abundant life. He's the Branch that was cut off for the punishment of all sins – including every one of your sinful thoughts, words and deed – the things you've done and the things you've left undone.

Death has no hold over Him, for He's the Righteous, eternal Branch. Before leaving the grave He descended into hell to declare victory over sin, death, and the grave. Ascending into Heaven the Righteous Branch sits upon His eternal throne at the right hand of the Father where He now rules for all time over heaven and earth. Because of His perfect life, death, and resurrection, all who trust in Him for salvation, will live in His Kingdom forever and ever.

Before His Ascension, the Righteous Branch promised to send a helper, the gift of the Holy Spirit to draw all mankind to Him in faith and to teach and sanctify the whole Christian Church. (cf: John 14:16) Either in the waters of Holy Baptism or when you came to faith in the hearing of the Gospel, you received the Spirit and were grafted onto the True Branch that never dies. By abiding in the Branch you are safe secure in the ark of His Christian Church. His life is your life, and it cannot end. Jeremiah had the promise. You have the promise fulfilled and you wait in eager anticipation. So:

***“Rejoice greatly... Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation...”*** (Zechariah 9:9)

The Righteous Branch has done all the work. You merely receive His precious gifts of grace. He has reconciled you with the Father, making peace between mankind and our Lord God. As you

await His Final Advent, His coming again, you can sing your praises with the Palm Sunday crowds saying:

***“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*** (Luke 19:38)

As one grafted into the Righteous Branch, you can now return thanksgiving to God in word and deed by serving your neighbor with fruits of faith that flow from the love of Him who first loved you. You can pray for what you lack in faith, trusting that on the Last Day when the Righteous Branch returns, your heart may be blameless in holiness before our God and Father, living a sanctified and God pleasing life. (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

The Righteous Branch who came two thousand years ago as the fruit of Mary’s womb comes to you today where two or three are gathered in His Name. He comes to you in the preaching of His Gospel. And He comes to you in, with, and under the bread and wine in His Holy Supper to strengthen you in body and soul so that you can serve Him in word and deed.

Every promise our Lord God has made has been fulfilled – except for one. The Righteous Branch will come one more time. He’ll return just as He has said. Although many years have passed and some have given up hope, He promises you that He will come again. And when He does, He comes to take you and all believers home to everlasting life.

The Branch of Righteousness who did come, who continues to come, will come again to transform your lowly, sin-laden body into pure righteousness like His glorious body, perfect in mind, body, and soul, in the image of God, so that you dwell eternally with Him in His Kingdom which has no end. (Philippians 3:21)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.