

Sunday Sermon: December 2, 2018

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Sermon Theme: Jesus is Coming to Fulfill all His Promises

¹⁴ “ ‘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.

¹⁵ “ ‘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.

¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’

When I was little, it was always something special when grandma and grandpa would come to visit. My family had a habit of calling right before we left to let someone know we were on the way. When that call came, the countdown was on. About 3 hours from now grandma and grandpa would be here.

There was nothing like that time when I was waiting for them to get there. It was exciting, it was boring, the time went by so quickly, the time went by so slowly. You can imagine how many times my brother and sister and I asked mom and dad if they thought that grandma and grandpa were close. Then finally, it happened. Someone would call out, “They’re here!” and we’d all rush to the door to be the first to greet them.

This Advent, we have a chance to wait and watch, with anticipation of something amazing about to happen. We get ready for Jesus to come. We have a chance to prepare for his birth, but as we prepare for the Savior to come in Bethlehem, we should also prepare for his second coming where he will come again, not humble in a stable, as a baby in Bethlehem, but in all of his glory, as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, on the last day when he will graciously fulfill all of his promises to us once and for all.

Getting ready for the holiday Christmas is easy to do at this time of year. The Christmas carols we sing and the decorations we see constantly remind us the holiday is coming. However, as we prepare for the holiday of Christmas, we are not always preparing for our Savior to come and what the birth of that baby means for us. **Jeremiah says,” ¹⁴ “ ‘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. ¹⁵ “ ‘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.**

God gave this promise of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament in many ways, using many pictures, so that the people would prepare themselves in faith. Here in Jeremiah and in Isaiah is one of the Messiah, Jesus, who would be a righteous branch from David’s line, a king who would rule unlike any other king.

By the time of Jeremiah, the great kings of David’s line were all but gone. Picture a tree. David and his son Solomon would have been the great trunk of the tree. From that trunk had sprouted more kings after them like branches. Many of these kings were wicked. These wicked kings were like dead branches. Their rule led nowhere. They would die and not be remembered. They were cut off from the tree of David.

There were also some kings who were faithful and ruled in the same way that David did. Although they were good kings, they were not as strong as David. These branches were not nearly as strong as the trunk. Over time, there were less and less powerful kings, less and less honorable kings, which meant there were less and less until all that was left was the trunk, the stump. The people longed for a king who would be strong and rule with the honor of David. They were looking for a good strong branch, not one of the shriveled, gnarled, terrible branches they had seen for so long.

God promised that he would send a Messiah from David’s stump, from David’s line, who would rule righteously. This prophecy of Jeremiah is much like the prophesy of Isaiah. They both point to the Messiah God would send who would be special, he would be righteous, not like these other kings.

The word righteous is not talking about someone who is just a good king and who rules his people well. This word, righteous, is actually talking about a perfect ruler. A ruler who would deliver perfect love and justice to the people in a way that no other sinful king could.

God fulfilled his prophecy, first, in Bethlehem. Jesus was born in David’s hometown of Bethlehem because both Mary and his step-father Joseph were David’s descendants. God announced the birth of this

righteous Messiah through the song of the angels, witness of the shepherds, and the worship of Simeon, Anna and later the Wise Men.

God sent his righteous Savior to do the work of saving us. Jeremiah says, “**In those days Judah will be saved. Jerusalem will live in safety.**” After King Solomon died, the nation of Israel had a civil war with two kings claiming rule. This divided the nation of Israel into two separate nations. The northern 10 tribes called their nation Israel. The southern 2 tribes called their nation Judah. These two names are often used by God to contrast believers and unbelievers.

Israel was very wicked. They set up idols and turned their backs on God. They refused to believe in God. They were punished for their unbelief. God sent the Assyrians to destroy them. The Israelites are often used as a picture of those who were not faithful. Judah, is often pictured as the faithful ones who held on to their faith. Through Judah, the promise of the Savior and true faith in that Savior were kept alive.

Jeremiah shows us the promise of God to send his righteous Savior to save all those who are faithful. There is so much more than a birth that we celebrate at Christmas. We should also remember that our righteous Savior saved us by his perfect life and innocent suffering and death.

Jesus had to be perfect so that we can be saved. There are those who believe that we can get to heaven by being good. When we look at what God says in his word we see that God does give us the possibility that we could get into heaven by their works. But then when we look at the requirements that God sets, we see the bar is very high. To get into heaven on our own we must meet these requirements: we must be absolutely perfect from the minute we were born to the minute we die.

This isn't possible. There must be another way. God tells us there is. Someone has to stand in our place, do that work for us, and give us the perfection we don't have. God sent his perfect, righteous Savior to do just that. **When the time had fully come God sent his Son, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.**

All people are born under God's Law because he is the creator and we are the creation. Every time we sin, we break that Law. Jesus had to be born under those same Laws, just like we are, so that he could follow all those Laws for us. When Paul says we have the full rights of sons, He is telling us that Jesus took our place perfectly and now we have the same perfection and blessings that Jesus won because he gives it to us.

What an amazing thing that Jesus has lived perfectly for us and gives us his perfection, but we still have a problem. Before we can get into heaven, God demands that there be a payment a punishment for our sins. Jesus is once again our righteous Savior. Jesus steps into our place to suffer as our substitute, and die to pay the price for the sins that we commit.

This is the work that Jesus had to do on earth to save us. He did that work completely, perfectly, righteously. There is nothing we can add because perfect is perfect. When he called out on the cross “**It is finished.**” it was the cry of victory. It was a victory for him, but it was also a victory for us.

Jesus earthly work of saving us is perfectly complete. This promise is fulfilled. That promise is fulfilled. However, we are not living safely in our heavenly home. There is more that Jesus does for us. He continues to rule over all things for the good of us his church.

Many say that Jesus doesn't care about what happens on the earth. Many say that if God were loving he would not let terrible things go on every day. There are many that doubt that God is good, righteous, and perfect.

Many times we may act and live as if we feel the same way. Even in this special time of Christmas, we find it difficult to find time to be in church to hear the good news, or to have some meditation on our special Savior. We have no time for that because we spend so much time on the other Christmas preparations.

If we find it hard to prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas, which most Christians agree is pretty important, how is our preparation to meet Jesus when he comes again? Many times, instead of waiting in faith, our mind wanders to all the other things we have to do in this life. We have to make the kids happy, be a good wife or husband, find a date, go to work. All these other things fill our lives and we can't find time for the most basic of things that we really need: a time of preparation, a time of watchfulness, some time with our righteous, holy, and perfect Savior who has done all of this work to save us.

Even though we take Jesus for granted, Jesus is still working in heaven for us. Whether we are in them or not, there are services in churches just like ours every Sunday. This is Jesus working for us, making sure that his Word continues to call each and every one of us to himself. Jesus is working for us when we are in church,

making sure that the Holy Spirit is working faith through the Word and Sacrament. In our Gospel, Jesus promised he would never stop working for us because his Word will never disappear from the earth. That is a great and comforting promise of our Savior, that his Word will always be here to show us the way to heaven until he comes again.

So many of God's promises have been fulfilled, but there are still a few that remain. We do not yet live in safety as Jeremiah says we will.

We know the day will come when Jesus will return again in all of his glory to fulfill his promises once and for all and will bring us to the safety that Jeremiah speaks us. As we praise and thank the baby in Bethlehem let's also look forward to the day when he will come again to fulfill all of his promises and to take us to the safety of our heavenly home.