

## “The Church in Advent: Hopeful”—Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 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. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

In a world filled with hopelessness and darkness, the Church of the Lord Jesus in Advent is hopeful—that is, we are filled with hope.

Now, the words we’ve heard this morning from the prophet Jeremiah were intended for a people who had no hope, a people who were finding it hard to believe in the promises of God. They had believed that God had promised that Israel as a nation would always exist; that a son of David would always sit on the throne of Jerusalem; and that God’s people would always be able to come to the Temple of Jerusalem to worship the one true God. But the great and powerful Babylonian Empire had ravaged the country, leaving Judah’s political, religious, and social structures in shambles. How difficult it was to find hope in a hopeless situation!

God had spoken through Jeremiah before, calling him to pronounce judgment upon the nation. But God spoke through Jeremiah again, this time with a message of hope. “‘The days are surely coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.’” The days are coming when a son of David will once again sit on throne of Israel. The days are coming when that king will rule in fairness to all people and will lead them in doing what is right before God and for each other. Jeremiah spoke the word of God, and the people heard, and hope sprang up anew—they looked for that promised day to come.

Our forefathers and foremothers in the faith, those first Christians, remembered the words of God spoken through Jeremiah—and immediately they applied them to Jesus of Nazareth, whom they believed to be the Son of God and yet the Son of David—certainly the righteous Branch of which Jeremiah had spoken, come to set up, not the kingdom of Israel, but the kingdom of God. And as we hear these words today, we, too, apply them to Jesus

So we have hope, and we have placed our hope, not in human agents or human agencies, but in the Almighty God who has revealed his love for us and for the whole world in Jesus, his Son and our Savior. You see, as we’ve told you many times, when we as Christians talk about “hope,” we’re talking about a surety, a certainty—a reality of which we are so certain that we’re willing to stake all that

we are and all that we have on it. And we're willing to stake all that we are and all that we have on this reality because it comes, not from human agents with faults and failings, but from God, who is faithful to his word—the God who says, “The days are surely coming when I will fulfill the promise I made ...” The days are coming, God says, when I will make all things right, when justice and righteousness will be the rule instead of the exception. The fulfillment of the promise began on a night long ago, in the city of David called Bethlehem, when the God who chose to become flesh and blood was born; and it will come to its rightful conclusion on a day when the Son of God who is also the Son of Man comes in glory to make everything right.

And because we have this hope, the Church in Advent—and all year long—is hopeful: we are filled with hope. We are filled with the hope—the surety, the certainty of faith—that, through Jesus, our sins are forgiven, we are reconciled to God, we are given a new chance to live in obedience to God, and we are promised life with God forever and ever. But we are also filled with the hope—the surety, the certainty of faith—that, as he said he would, Jesus will return and establish his kingdom as the only reality in all creation. So we as Christians can face whatever life throws our way, knowing that God will finish what he began with a little child born in a manger twenty centuries ago. When we are weary in well-doing, when joyful obedience becomes drudgery, when waiting and watching become a bore, when we wonder if God will ever come, hope rekindles the flame in our hearts, lifts up our heads, and brings back the joy of the things of God. For hope reminds us that even though God seems to work slowly, as we mark time, God in his own time will finish what he started. The Church in Advent is a hopeful, because our hope is in God, our righteousness, our peace, and our salvation. Thanks be to God!