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Advent 1 C – Nov. 28, 2022

“The Day Will Come”

Read: Jeremiah 33: 14 - 16 /Memorize: Jeremiah 33: 15

In high school, I enjoyed being in plays. You might notice my dramatic flair at times. One thing all who perform need to remember is that something will go wrong at times. So, you always want to be ready to improvise if need be.

An actress recalls that time in the Wizard of OZ. She was Glinda, the good witch, coming down to the stage in a large bubble. As her descent began, the bubble stopped working. She was stuck in the air as her cast mates down below adlibbed, “She’s coming ... It’s Glinda ...She’s coming ...Glinda’s coming ...” and that went on for a long time.

Imagining that scene, perhaps you can muster a little sympathy for this prophet named Jeremiah as he tried to point his nation to the coming of a Messiah. In a troubled time, Israel needed a Savior. Jeremiah’s task was to give them hope. In his book, *The Rest of God*, Pastor Mark Buchannan tells of counseling a young woman who was struggling on two fronts: she had never healed from childhood abuse and neglect. Those painful experiences now fueled her present bad choices. Nothing he said could heal her past or change her present situation.

It was in this moment of despair that he realized that God still had plans and promises for this woman’s future. Her hope lay in trusting the God who sent her a Savior rather than in any word he could share. Pastor Buchanan shares this insight: I described how Jesus has power to bring everything under His control...”

Pastor Buchannan summarizes the message of Jeremiah to Israel and us as well: “The day will come, says the LORD, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them.”

“In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this will be its name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.

Jeremiah is often called the prophet of doom or the weeping prophet. He did seem to be a bit unpopular. What got him into trouble was his mouth. His inability to hold his tongue cost him dearly. He was banished from his priesthood; physically beaten and publically humiliated for proclaiming his unpopular words about the king and the nation.

To escape punishment, all he had to do was be quiet but he could not do that. He could have enjoyed a life of peace and comfortable. He used references to how animals have to obey their impulses; humans don't, to help the people understand his messages.

He might have gotten to enjoy all those nature things he paid attention to, maybe even cultivate a garden; enjoy the blessings of marriage and family if he just kept quiet. Why didn't he? The answer is simple: There was a voice within him that would not let him remain silent.

Jeremiah was sent to warn the nation about its faults and the consequences for its disobedience and disregard of right-living. They would not listen. When calamity came, he could have pridefully said "I told you so." But he didn't. That was not the message God had put into his heart.

When we first meet Jeremiah he is the preacher of righteousness. Yet, by the end of his book, he speaks words of comfort and hope to those who are suffering. He may have mellowed, but the situation had also changed. Where before, they had to be confronted about their sin. Now they needed grace, comfort and hope.

So the man who said the days are coming gives them new insight: "Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth from David; and He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land; this is the name by which He will be called: 'The Lord is Our Righteousness.'"

Just in case they miss it, sixteen times in this book, he says, "The days are coming." He is looking beyond the days when Jerusalem will be restored to the coming of the Lord, Jesus. He very likely did not understand how God would fulfill that Messianic promise, but they needed to hear it. Like all promises of God, it

would be fulfilled. So what if it took six hundred years. What is six hundred years to a God who says a thousand years is but a day?

God wanted them to hear that the days were coming. Were they right around the corner? No! There is an inevitability about them but we don't know when. Does it mean that there won't be heartaches, yet? No! It doesn't mean that either, but you can etch it in stone so it will never be forgotten: the days are coming.

We gather on this first Sunday in Advent to proclaim that the days are coming. The days are coming where there will be justice. That's the first promise that Jeremiah makes about the coming of the Messiah. That's an important word for our world.

Perhaps it will come as in this old Arabian story about a wealthy prince who claims the land of a poor widow so that he can enlarge his palace gardens. She brings her complaint to a judge who is a man of character and integrity. He is also wise. He knows that the wealthy prince could ruin him. Things have not changed much, have they?

Rather than summon the prince to his court, the judge took a large sack to the palace. He asked the prince if he could fill his sack with dirt from the palace garden. The curious prince agreed. After the judge had filled the sack to the brim with dirt, he asked the prince to lift it. The prince said, "The sack is too heavy even for our combined strength."

The judge replied, "This sack which you think too heavy to bear, contains only a small portion of the land that you took from the rightful owner. How then, at the Day of Judgement, will you be able to support the weight of the whole?" We have an innate need for justice, don't we?

We want to see the bad punished and good rewarded. So, until the Messiah comes what is our role in creating justice? We have to deal with that question because it is all too easy to turn a blind eye to injustice; even to benefit from it.

We cringe when we are treated unjustly, yet we treat others unjustly. We want people to be righteous but demure from it ourselves if it means a loss our status, power or affluence.

Prophetic words are meant to challenge; to wake us up. Life is not fair. Nevertheless, the days are coming says Jeremiah when the playing fields of the world will be leveled. When the Bible speaks of justice, it is not merely talking about individual justice. God's call is for a just society. God's call is for a society where all are treated according to his Word, with dignity.

Jesus says the days are coming when the last shall be first and the first shall be last. We need to take those words seriously and ask ourselves if we are contributing to a just society or if we are one seeking the status quo.

The days are also coming when there will be righteousness. Justice refers to the state of our society; righteousness to the state of our individual souls. There are so many who want to separate the two, seeking justice or righteousness, Jesus says that that is a false dichotomy. Justice and righteousness are attributes of the Kingdom. They are an essential expression of God's character. We do not have the luxury of choosing. There must be both.

The days are coming, says the Lord, when justice and righteousness will prevail. The message of Advent is about the redemption of society, as well as of individuals, accomplished by God Himself. We await that day with hope and expectation as our Lord reminds of what we are to keep our eyes and hearts focused upon: "Stir up thy power, oh Lord, and come!"