

First Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 33:14-16

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.’

33:14-26 As in previous revelations of God’s eternal plan for mankind, Jeremiah’s vision of good things to come is not limited to the return of the chosen people from exile but penetrates to those days when the messianic Branch, sprung from David’s lineage, will establish His universal kingdom of grace. (TLSB)

33:14 THE DAYS ARE COMING – This is like getting a wake up call. It gets their attention. It is like a splash of cold water in the morning. This is like saying “stop what you are going and pay attention to what I have to say.” Many of the Jews in exile had gotten comfortable with their lot in life and were making the best of it. They had lost sight of the long view of their spiritual life. It is easy for us to do that too. That is why we celebrate Advent each year. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

I WILL FULFILL THE GRACIOUS PROMISE – *dabar* – To arrange in order to keep a promise. It is the “good word” that something will happen as it had been declared earlier. I will bring you back to this place. What wonderfully sweet words of grace and promise! The promise is always the good word – God’s good word – expressed personally, incarnationally, and universally in the Word, the Son – Jesus Christ. The promise here is not just the return of the Judean exiles; it includes much more. It is God’s earlier promise to both Judah and Israel (the northern kingdom destroyed in 722 BC, over 100 years before Jeremiah). It is God’s original plan of redemption, first articulated in Genesis 3:15 as to be carried out by the seed of Eve, then explained more fully as Abraham’s seed (Genesis 12:1-3) and the Son of David (2 Samuel 7). Yahweh frequently reaffirms and elaborates this promise throughout the OT. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Jeremiah 29:10 “This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back.”

33:15–16 Repeated from 23:5–6 (see notes there). (CSB)

33:15 A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH – Jesus. Jeremiah wants to tell God’s people that not all is lost. This branch will grow a shoot of new life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

SPROUT – He would not only be a king but also a priest. For the Lord promised that the Levites would always have one to serve as priest before Him. He could not be

as other high priests for they served only until they died. His service would have to extend beyond the temple and its worship, for that worship would be interrupted and finally cease altogether. (PBC)

HE WILL DO - *awsaw* – To get things done. To make it happen or to execute when it counts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

WHAT IS JUST AND RIGHT - *mishpat* – A verdict or sentence. In this case the word comprises both “justification” (God’s “justice – undeserved grace or salvation) and “sanctification,” a norm of behavior corresponding to God’s norm. God’s justice salvation by grace through faith in the Christ’s death and resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

Ambrose writes, “He who looks upon the Son see, in portrait, the Father. Mark what manner of portrait is spoken of. It is Truth, Righteousness, the Power of God: not dumb, for it is the Word; not insensible, for it Wisdom; not vain and foolish, for it is Power; not soulless, for it is life; not death, for it is the Resurrection.” (NPN2 10:208) (TLSB)

33:16 *it will be called.*† Because the righteous Branch from David’s line imputes his righteousness (23:6) to his subjects, they themselves will bear the holy name (for other examples see Jdg 6:24; Eze 48:35). But see NIV text note. (CSB)

The exact opposite of Judah’s current atmosphere is about to fall. Babylon’s forces are hr gates (Jere 6:6). There is no safety behind the walls made of stone and mortar. Jeremiah in prophetic vision sees the New Jerusalem and the kingdom of grace. Here there is safety and peace, for Jesus, the Prince of Peace, sits on David’s throne and rules with righteousness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS – By virtue of His righteousness imputed to the subjects of the King, they themselves will bear the holy name. They will have full access to the throne of God through His mediation, prefigured by the sacrifices offered by Israel’s priests. These long-range promises will be fulfilled as certainly as God lets day and night follow each other. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

⁹How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? ¹⁰Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. ¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. ¹²May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blame less and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

3:9 *thank God.* The preceding shows that Paul’s work of evangelism had been effective. He might have congratulated himself on work well done, but instead he thanked God for the joy he had from what God had done. (CSB)

A rhetorical question expressing awe and gratitude to God after hearing about the faith of the Thessalonians. (TLSB)

Words cannot express Paul’s deep gratitude for the faith and love demonstrated by the Thessalonian Christians. Grateful that they so well grasped the Gospel under his instruction, he gives thanks to God. Having learned of their firm stand in face of opposition, he reflects affectionately. Psalm 116:12 RSV comes to mind: “What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?” He is all but ecstatic about their mutual love “in God’s presence.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

It shows that whatever success Paul has had is directly due to what God has helped happen. Paul does well not to grab the credit but recognizes the real source of evangelism effectiveness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR GOD - *emprosthen* - In front of or in sight of. It reflects a consciousness of God’s presence in the Christian’s everyday life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:10 *Night and day.* Not prayer at two set times, but frequent prayer (see 1:2–3). (CSB)

WE PRAY – *deomai* – To beg, binding oneself, petitioning, beseeching or making a request. This is quantified both as to frequency (night and day) and quality (as earnestly as possible). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

most earnestly. Translates a strong and unusual Greek compound word (found elsewhere in the NT only in 5:13; Eph 3:20) that brings out Paul’s passionate longing. (CSB)

Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

1 Thessalonians 5:13 “Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.”

WE MAY SEE - *eido* – To see in a sense to know or be aware of something. To be sure.

SUPPLY - *katartizo* – To complete thoroughly . To repair or restore.

what is lacking. Some of the things lacking were of a practical nature, such as moral (4:1–12) and disciplinary matters (5:12–24). Others were doctrinal, such as confusion over Christ’s return (4:13–5:11). (CSB)

husterema - What is in want or has a deficit.

Their trust in God was not defective. Rather, they needed instruction in certain matters. (TLSB)

your faith. The fifth time in the chapter that Paul speaks of their faith (see vv. 2, 5–7). (CSB)

Paul really wanted to mingle face to face with these Macedonian Christians. He hankered to build upon their basic beliefs so as to render them stronger still in faith and life. Paul did provide them (4:1-5:22) with a detailed listing for ongoing instruction in the Christian faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

3:11–13 Paul expresses his wishes in a prayer for the Thessalonians after he has heard the encouraging report Timothy brought back. (TLSB)

3:11 In the middle of a letter Paul frequently breaks into prayer (e.g., Eph 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Php 1:9–11; Col 1:9–12). For the link between Father and Son see note on 1:1. (CSB)

GOD AND FATHER...LORD JESUS – God the Father and Christ are joint subjects of the sentence. The same function is ascribed to God the God the Father and to Jesus, who has divinity and equality with God the Father as the Second Person of the Trinity. (TLSB)

CLEAR THE WAY – He breaks into prayer here. He had been previously prevented from coming by Satan (2:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Paul knows that he will return to Thessalonica if the Lord of the church wills it. The devil may erect blockades, but the Lord “clears the way.” (LL)

3:12 *the Lord.* In Paul’s writings this usually means Jesus rather than the Father. (CSB)

Ambrose: “Who, then, is the Lord... He has named the Father and has named the Son; Whom, then, has he joined with the Father and the Son except the Spirit? Who is the Lord Who establishes our hearts in holiness” (NPNF 2 10:149). (TLSB)

In the midst of his own persecution, Paul managed to keep his focus on the one in charge, the Lord of the church. The Lord is like the fixed point of reference that allows a spinning dancer or skater to maintain her axis and orientation. The Lord is like the lighthouse that immovably signals land and shelter no matter how great the storm. (LL)

LOVE INCREASE AND OVERFLOW...EACH OTHER..EVERYONE ELSE – They were to love each other and also those outside of their congregation. Many times the great love shown within a congregation comes to the attention of those outside of it and draws them in. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Spiritually, not numerically. Cf Eph 3:16. (TLSB)

STRENGTHEN YOUR HEARTS - stayridzo – To set fast, turn resolutely, confirm or establish.

1 Corinthians 1:2 “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.”

3:13 *strengthen*. See note on v. 2. (CSB)

Stability encompassing the whole personality. (TLSB)

WILL BE BLAMELESS - hageeosoonay – Sacredness or holiness.

Holy in word and action; the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in a person’s life through Word and Sacrament. (TLSB)

holy. The basic idea is “set apart [for God].” Here it refers to the completed process of sanctification (see note on 1Co 1:2). (CSB)

Refers not only to the end times but also to the presence of the risen Lord among His people. (TLSB)

with all His saints. Even though there are references in the NT connecting angels with the Lord’s appearing (Mk 8:38; 13:27; Rv 19:14), here it may mean “the revealing of the sons of God” in association with the Lord. On the Last Day, the saints will come in glory, not to continue an earthly life. (TLSB)

3:6–13 Paul gives thanks and prays for the Thessalonians when he hears the good report from Timothy that they are standing in their faith and have the same kind of love for him as he has for them. Our faith in the Lord and love for one another should be as living and contagious as that of the Thessalonians. The Lord, who has promised to be with us until the end of time, will keep us in His faith and kindle His love in our hearts so that we may love Him and one another. • We praise You, O God, because the gates of hell cannot prevent the sown seed of Your Word from growing. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 21:25-36

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” ²⁹ He told them this

parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² “I tell you the truth, this generation ^a will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. ³⁴ “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

21:25-36 The shift to the second part of Luke’s eschatological discourse, from prophecy about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (21:5–24) to predictions about the end the world (21:25–36), is subtle. Luke gives no signals in his framework: no change of audience, location, or time. But both *form* and *content* are now apocalyptic.

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 330, comments on what is distinct about Luke’s shaping of Jesus’ final eschatological discourse: “There are two remarkable aspects of this final stage of the prophecy. The first is that it entirely lacks any temporal reference or time-table. ... The second striking feature is the attention given to moral exhortation.” (CC p. 800)

The chief feature in Luke’s arrangement of the prophecy is the coming of the Son of Man (21:27–36), but a brief yet powerful reference to the signs and conditions that accompany the end of the world comes first. This brief section *is the only time in Luke that he describes the signs that will accompany the end of the world!* (CC p. 800)

21:25-26 These verses describe a world that is coming apart. Everything that was dependable is no longer so. Even scientific laws don’t work in this end time scenario. The disciples asked for signs, and here they are, sings in sun, moon, and stars. What kind of signs? Quite likely the signs that Jesus referred to in Matt 24:29, quoting from Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7 and Joel 2:30-31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

The chaos on the earth before the creation (Gen 1:2) has returned, and nations cannot fathom what is happening. No fiction writer could create a more frightening picture than this one, for the “heavenly bodies” and those on the earth are being “shaken” like a rag doll in a puppy’s mouth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

The fearful portents and signs from heaven in 21:11 are unusual natural phenomena, which go with the other natural and historical disasters of that verse. But those in 21:25–26 are apocalyptic, catastrophic changes in the sky that indicate that the world is coming unglued. God’s orderly creation becomes unstable and reverts toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw his benevolence. God’s goodwill toward the originally good work of his hands is increasingly turning into anger as his patience runs out with corrupt and perverse humanity. (CC p. 801)

Those who have invested everything in this world and this life will be shocked and literally “scared to death” by what the end of time brings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

21:25 Jesus focuses more directly on the events relating to the end of the world. (TLSB)

signs. Cosmic events (eclipses, comets) and earthly events (storms, tidal waves) prepare for the ultimate catastrophe; creation itself is torn apart. (TLSB)

Note that the signs described in 21:10-11 are preludes to the destruction of the temple. All the events described thus far could be located during the Jewish war of A.D. 66-73. Parallel signs are described at the beginning of Jesus’ description of the end of the world, but the very fact that Luke repeats those items in another section of eschatological discourse suggests two similar but distinct events. It will seem as if the end of the world is near when the temple is destroyed, for it will be a sign of judgment by God on Israel for rejecting her Messiah – and a portent of God’s final judgment upon all who reject the Christ. (CC p. 793)

EARTH – γῆς—“Earth,” not “land” as in 21:23, for the focus has spread from Israel to the whole earth. (CC p. 786)

NATIONS – ἐθνῶν—“Nations,” not just “Gentiles” as in its three occurrences in 21:24, because the entire world, Jews and Gentiles, is now in focus. (CC p. 786)

Worldwide confusion at these events. (TLSB)

ANGUISH AND PERPLEXITY – ἀπορία ἤχους θαλάσσης—The genitive following ἀπορία, “in perplexity,” identifies that which evokes the perplexity (CC p. 786)

ROARING AND TOSSING OF THE SEA – The sea itself is its own storm center, and the wind itself is driven by the sea and not the other way around. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

21:26 MEN WILL FAINT – Reaction moves from confusion to fear. (TLSB)

ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων—This genitive absolute describes the impact the “anguish of nations in perplexity at the sound and tossing of the sea” from the previous verse has upon human beings. (CC p. 786)

Note from Revelation **21:1** NO LONGER ANY SEA – To ancient people the sea held a terror especially when its boiling waves threatened and often destroyed human life (e.g,

Ps 107:23-30). In the early stage of creations the waters were associated with the darkness and the primeval formlessness and chaos (Gen. 1:2). The sea is the home to the evil serpent (Amos 9:3), Leviathan. In the earthly ministry of Jesus too, the sea was a threat to the apostles, a threat which Jesus conquered (e.g., Mt. 8:24-27; 14:24-33). The sea is the primeval ocean, symbol of chaos; its disappearance is assurance of God's total victory. The absence of the sea from the new heaven and earth in the context of 21:1-8 suggests not the absence of water in the geo-physically renewed earth, but an absence of any fear of water and terror that the sea evoked, especially the absence of any painful reminder that God's saints had once been separated from him. (CC pp. 593, 595)

APPREHENSIVE OF WHAT IS COMING – φόβου καὶ προσδοκίας—This is probably a hendiadys, “fearful expectation.” The co-ordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other. (CC p. 786)

HEAVENLY BODIES WILL BE SHAKEN – To waver, be toppled, stirred up, disturbed, incited or even destroyed – God's orderly creation becomes unstable and reverts toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw his benevolence. God's goodwill toward the originally good work of his hands is increasingly turning into anger as his patience runs out with corrupt and perverse humanity. (CC p. 801)

21:27-36 The coming of the Son of Man only intensifies the fear of unbelievers. But for the faithful it is Good News. Therefore Jesus gives to his catechumens five final words to help them prepare “to stand in the presence of the Son of Man” (21:36b; the outer frame). These consist of four admonitions, with a promise in the center. The admonitions are governed by imperative verb forms (21:28—ἀνακύψατε [“straighten up”] and ἐπάρατε [“lift”]; 21:29–31—ἴδετε [“see”] and γινώσκετε [“know”]; 21:34–35—προσέχετε [“beware”]; 21:36a—ἀγρυπνεῖτε [“be watchful, awake”]). In the center (21:32–33), however, stands a prediction (future indicative) surrounded by two emphatic promises (each with οὐ μὴ the first with an aorist subjunctive and the second with a future indicative). This whole center section is introduced by ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, “truly I say to you.” These words are the climax of Jesus' teaching in this section. (CC p. 803)