

Written Copy: Jeremiah 33:14-16 “Signs Your Redemption Is Near”

First Sunday in Advent
Sunday, December 1st, 2024

Text: Jeremiah 33:14-16

¹⁴ "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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.'

The text's intent

Just as the LORD both promised and followed through on the destruction of His people's land and their punishment in death and discipline into exile, He gives the sure and certain promise of restoration to the land as it was at the time of the Davidic Kingdom. He also promises to restore His people before Him in faithful right standing with Him. He will accomplish this through the coming of the Righteous Branch from David's line, the human being who will live a perfectly obedient life and give us the credit for it as His gift of faith. He will also fulfill justice on our behalf, becoming the atoning sacrifice to cleanse us from our disobedience. Through this spiritual restoration we can live once again in His presence when He restores Creation as originally intended on the Last Day.

Focus Statement:

Jesus tells us that as we see all the end time signs being fulfilled, we are to straighten up, raise our heads, knowing our redemption is near. We are to see all these scary signs and promised affliction as promises of the great restoration to come that will be eternal life. We can know by faith His return means our redemption because of His Messianic work of earning our righteousness and fulfilling God's call for justice by His atoning sacrifice. While His Last Day return will mean fear and punishment for the unbelieving world, for us it means the fulfillment of God's restoration promised from the beginning.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We want to focus on the good old days. The thought of things getting worse and unraveling causes us worry, fear, and distress. Our focus on the troubles increasing now can take our focus off the promised glory to come, and how these troubles are signposts to the fulfillment promised.

What the hearer should do as a result:

See the fulfillment of the warning signs accompanying Christ's return as sure and certain promises of the restoration of all things to come. Give thanks for His work to make us ever ready for that day when we will lift up our heads in joyful expectation.

Subject Sentence: End Time Signs Mean Joyful Expectation of Restoration

Introduction: Signs We Dread

Well here it is, the first day of December, and the beginning of the Season of Advent. A joyous time, right? Consider that there are only 22 days left to shop for Christmas (unless you really plan on shopping on Christmas Eve). There's snow on the ground outside, it's cold, the days are getting shorter, the malls are getting busier, your bank account is getting thinner, and after Thanksgiving, and all the holiday cookies and treats your waistline is getting bigger. Maybe it's not exactly that joyous a time after all.

How does that song go? *"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go."* The song talks about all the signs pointing to Christmas coming that are supposed to warm our hearts and bring us joy and expectation. Except that these signs I just mentioned can bring worry and dread instead of joy. This is especially true when it means celebrating Christmas without a loved one who was always there.

The same can be true when we look at the signs pointing toward our Savior's Second Coming on the Last Day. For the last couple Sundays these signs leading up to the Last Day have been the focus of our Gospel Readings and the sermons. We've heard about the increase of natural disasters, wars and rumors of war, the hearts of mankind growing colder toward one another, the unraveling of the powers of the universe, and how we need to remain ready because the end will come without warning. All these things can serve to bring dread upon our hearts and minds. We know things are getting worse year by year, but isn't it your wish that they might back off a notch, or stop getting worse, but instead remain on a kind of even keel, at least until the end of our lifetime?

But what does Jesus say about these things in our Gospel Lesson? **Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**" How can that be when what we are facing now is only going to get worse? How difficult will it be when these verses from Luke come true: **Luke 21:25-26 ²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

How is it that in the midst of all this we can straighten up and raise up our heads? It's all about our point of view. Instead of seeing these things from the eyes of the unbelieving world as the end of all things drawing near, we need to see them as the redemption of all things drawing near.

Jeremiah's Message of Fulfillment of Promises

The idea here is seeing all these things, both the good things and the bad things coming true, as signs that something wonderful and beautiful is on the way, the fulfillment of God's prophetic promises of the redemption of all things drawing near. This is behind the prophetic messages given to Jeremiah to proclaim in our Old Testament Lesson.

Jeremiah was living through the "end times" of the kingdom of Judah. He was given the prophetic message to deliver that Babylon would most certainly come as God's hand of destruction upon Judah and Jerusalem. The prophets before him, Isaiah in particular, also had this message to proclaim, except they could include the caveat that the worst could be avoided if the people turned back in faith to the LORD. But by and large they refused. By the time Jeremiah came on the scene it was too late, and the end was certain. The people continued to worship false gods instead of worshiping the God who gave them this land, forgiven them time and again when they went astray, and had sent prophet after prophet to call them back. They refused to turn back to the God who, through Moses farewell sermon to their forefathers, warned them that if they ever turned away from Him to worship other gods, this very thing would happen.

When Jeremiah was given the prophetic proclamation that is our Old Testament Lesson, he was under house arrest in the courtyard of the palace guard, placed there by King Zedekiah. Babylon had surrounded the walls of Jerusalem and had been laying siege to it. But then suddenly, they stopped and took off, leaving their siege works behind. They took off to deal with the Egyptian Army which had marched out to drive them back north, out of the land of Judah, which Egypt wanted to claim for itself. This gave the people of Jerusalem and their king false hope that the Egyptians would prevail, and Babylon would not return.

Instead, Jeremiah had given them the truth from the mouth of the LORD: Babylon would defeat the Egyptian army which would turn tail and head back to the safety of its borders. Babylon would return, they would break down the walls of Jerusalem, which the people thought was impossible to do, and fill the city with the dead, taking those who survived as captives into exile. Jeremiah told King Zedekiah that unless he gave in to Babylon's demands, he too would be captured and have to face King Nebuchadnezzar himself, before being taken away into exile for the rest of his life. Jeremiah went on to prophesy that all of the area surrounding Jerusalem, including all the land that used to be the nation of Israel would be left a broken desolate wasteland. This being a very unpopular message, it landed Jeremiah under house arrest.

All that Jeremaih prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of Israel came true in his lifetime, including the capture of King Zedekiah who tried to escape when Babylon broke through the walls. He and his soldiers were captured as they tried to flee for safety across the Jordan River. He was brought before King Nebuchadnezzar in chains who made him watch all his advisors being put to death by the sword, and then watch the same fate happen to his family. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar ordered Zedekiah's eyes to be cut out, and he was led off into captivity never to return to the land of promise again.

These were all horrible signs. But they had to be fulfilled for even greater signs to come true. This destruction amounted to a cleansing of the land from idol worship. And God's people being taken into exile had the purpose of beginning a spiritual cleansing. It served not just as punishment for those who died, but as discipline for those who survived, teaching them to turn from the false God's they trusted in and to the One true God.

All these horrible prophetic signs coming true pointed to the other message Jeremiah got to proclaim, that the Lord would restore the land and the people. That there would come a day when the desolate wasteland that the Promised Land had become would have its cities rebuilt and inhabited by God's chosen people. There would come a day when flocks of sheep and goats would cover the countryside again. God's people would once again live in the land which supported them with the necessities of life. There would be the sound of wedding bells, the bridegroom and bride singing, the voices of gladness and rejoicing over the good gifts God had provided. And once again there would be the sound of the faithful bringing their offerings of thanks and praise to worship the Lord in the temple, which would also be rebuilt.

The signs of horrible destruction were also the signs that pointed to a glorious redemption and restoration of God's blessings upon His people. And the Lord not only promised to redeem and restore the people's outward way of life, the exile served to restore them spiritually as God's precious repentant children who worshiped and served the One true God, and Him alone. But Jeremiah's prophetic word also included a sign that looked 600 years into the future.

The Promised Redemption of The Soul

Jeremiah 33:14-15 ¹⁴ "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. ¹⁵ 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.

This is the reason that the LORD saved and set aside a remnant in exile, so that they would return to the Promise Land, and from them would spring up the One who fulfilled this prophetic promise given to Jeremiah, and Isaiah before him, and all the way back to David. It is the Messianic promise of the righteous Branch springing up from David. This would be a man descended from the lineage of David who would be given the power and authority to rule God's people, not just for a time, but for eternity to come.

He would be the "righteous" branch, a man who always followed the commands and will of God the Father and did them perfectly in all that He did, said, and thought. He was always in right standing before the Father, with no charges of His own sinfulness against Him. He would come to execute justice, God's justice, that declared sinful disobedience must be punished. And this Righteous Branch came to fulfill that, not by executing all the sinful people, but by becoming the atoning sacrifice for all men. This Righteous Branch is the child that came on Christmas Day, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus, His once and for all sacrifice on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead is the power to redeem and restore not just the children of Isreal, but all people who believe in Him as Lord and Savior, including you. Through His gift of faith He takes your sin and gives to you His right standing, redeeming you from the eternal death you owe, and restoring you before God as His precious and beloved child.

The Signs of Our Promised Redemption

Just as the land in Jeremiah's day needed to be destroyed to be cleansed from idol worship, our sinful fallen world today is headed for a greater destruction. Sin has infected it so deeply that there is no restoring it. And all these frightful signs described in our Gospel Lesson the past two Sundays show us that it is coming,

But just as Jeremiah prophesied a destruction that would lead to God's gracious restoration of His people to the land, the signs in our Gospel Lesson point to the greatest restoration and redemption that will ever be. This fallen world must be destroyed so it can be replaced by the New Heaven and the New Earth, where the brokenness of sin is gone forever. This is certainly something to look forward to.

But that Last Day will include an even greater redemption and restoration, that of our bodies and souls. All who believe and trust in Jesus Christ will be raised with completely restored bodies that are perfect, better than they ever were in this lifetime. And into those perfect bodies Christ will place our souls that have been restored to the complete perfection of mankind before the Fall.

As we are now, because of our faith relationship with Christ, we are declared to be in right standing with God, yet our continued sinfulness stands against that. That makes our lives now a constant battle between the sinful heart and the redeemed heart that believes in Jesus, a battle that necessitates our daily confession of sins and holding fast to Jesus' words of forgiveness in the Gospel. But on that Last Day to come there will be no more need for Confession and Absolution because all that we will do, say, and think will always be in loving obedience to the Lord and His will. We will know what He wants of us, and we will always be able to do it perfectly.

How is it that on that Last Day (**Luke 21:28**) **...when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near?**

Because rather than these things being signs of the end, we by faith see them as the completion of the redemption our Lord that was begun in us at our baptism, and has been the work of the Holy Spirit in you through the proclamation of the Gospel. They are all signs that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who is our Savior who gave His life for us, has come to bring His gracious reign and rule to encompass all things in the New Heaven and New Earth. He has come to fully restore our bodies and our souls to the perfection of the original Creation, and welcome us into life everlasting.

Conclusion

It is December the first, and there are only 22 shopping days until Christmas. It's cold and snowy, the malls are full, your bank account is empty, and your waistline is ever growing. So much to do and the pressure is on. But all these struggles make that Christmas day when it comes all that much sweeter.

The signs of the End Times are being fulfilled. The world is getting to be a darker place. Our battle against sin rages on daily. But all these signs point forward to that greater day to come. They point toward that day when all has been fulfilled, and our Lord and Savior returns and completes the redemption of all things in Creation, including your body and soul. And we rejoice in His real presence now as we struggle through all these things, as He keeps us looking expectantly forward to this truth: **Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.** He is drawing nearer every day. And all God's children say "***Come, Lord Jesus!***" Amen.