

Which is More Important – Those Days or These Days?

1st Sun. in Advent – 12/01/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Jeremiah 33:14-16 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 15, [Yahweh declares through Jeremiah,] **“In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David...”**

v.16, **“In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which she will be called: ‘Yahweh is our righteousness.’”**

Introduction

✘ I think it’s safe to say that most of us believe that some days are just more important than others.

→ As you look back over your life I’m sure you could list some of those days that stand above the rest. For me, the day of JFK’s inauguration stands out – not because of JFK, but because it was the day I was born. A day that I actually remember is the day Apollo 11 landed on the moon. I can picture exactly where I was when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded and when I first heard of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Even more important than those events, I remember the day I first started flirting with a beautiful young lady named Mary Beth, and the day we were married, as well as each one of the births of our four kids.

→ I’m sure you all have special days and events that are important in the story of your life.

✘ In today’s Old Testament Reading, Jeremiah speaks as God’s mouthpiece to the people of Jerusalem about some supremely important, crucial and stand-out days. Twice Yahweh refers to “those days” that are coming in their future. But for you and me today, as we gather here in the Lord’s Divine Service, we celebrate that “*those* (same) days” have already come.

→ They came 2000 years ago with the “advent” – that is the “coming” – of God’s Son in human flesh. That day of His birth was the beginning of “*those* days” of which Jeremiah speaks in our text; days that included Jesus preaching the good news of God’s kingdom, healing the sick, driving out demons, suffering and dying for our sins on the cross, rising on the third day, and ascending to the Father.

→ *Those* were the days; the days when our Savior, Jesus, walked visibly in our world and won our salvation. *Those* are the most important days this world has ever seen. They are the centerpiece of human history because “*those* days” of Jesus on earth are days that bring meaning and hope to all other days...before and since “*those* days.”

I. People then and now only care about “these days”

✘ Jeremiah, under God’s direction, had the task of pointing people toward “*those* days.” But, here’s the problem; the people in Jeremiah’s time, like people in every age, were more interested in their own days; in the right-now; in the today needs in their lives. “*These* are the days; *these* are the days that count ... to me, because *these* are my days.” Be honest, folks, that’s where our focus most instinctively wants to go, right? “I have rent to pay and health concerns and a difficult boss. I’ve got to figure out how to get the kids to music lessons, confirmation class and getting the basement remodeled. I need to make sure I’m ready for my retirement or how I’m going to get to the doctor. Plus, I’m already committed to my political causes, my special hobbies, and making sure I can catch all of my favorite sports team’s games. There are mouths to feed, grass to mow, cars to fix ... and now the church wants me to plug in and actively serve the Lord here.” “So,” Jeremiah, “how about you talk to me about *these* days here. *These* are the days that I care about most.”

- ⊗ This, you see, had become the dominant mindset for the majority of the Israelites at the time of today's text. They rejected the words of God's prophets; they abandoned worshipping God as He commanded and instead, they turned to false gods and false prophets.
 - ➔ As we see in our culture today, they were enamored by those "other" prophets whose messages focused on the here and now. They switched their worship and trust over to the popular gods of their neighbors; gods that their prophets said could guarantee them a good crop this year or multiply their herds or protect them from Yahweh's threat of the Babylonians attacking them right now. But this wasn't something new. It had been going for centuries now, where God sent His true prophets to warn His people and call them back; to shake them out of their "*these days*" focus and try to get them to trust in God's promises for "*those days*" – that is the coming days of the Messiah.
- ⊗ Now, in Jeremiah's generation, God's patience with Jerusalem finally came to an end. Because of their unbelief and idolatry, God announced that He was sending their punishment. The Babylonians were coming to destroy the city, and nothing could change it.
 - ➔ That was the situation; the "right-now" issue before the people in this text. Yet, in this desperate situation, Jeremiah shows them God's unchanged love even as they faced His necessary discipline. Yahweh promises in verse 14, "Behold, the days are coming...when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah"; His promise to send the Messiah; as "a righteous Branch" from the lineage of King David; a Branch who will "execute justice and righteousness" and save God's people in spite of their sin and rebellion.
- ⊗ And how do you suppose the people of Jerusalem reacted to Jeremiah's wonderful words of promise? Well, most of them despised him! "Get out of here, Jeremiah. Take your irrelevant, someday-down-the-road promises with you! We don't need a God who will help us 'in *those days*.' We're tired of a God who says, 'The days are coming.' We need prophets who will speak about peace for this day! If you haven't noticed, Jeremiah, there are like a million Babylonians outside these walls, every one of them wants our heads. They're planning to kill us; to carry us off into slavery. But all your God has to tell us is that 'the days are coming' when He will fulfill His promises? No one cares about '*those days*' Jeremiah."
 - ➔ Well, it wasn't long, and Jerusalem did actually fall to the Babylonians, just as Jeremiah had foretold. God's beautiful city was torn apart – her great walls toppled – God's Temple looted and destroyed. The prince of the city was taken before the Babylonian general and made to watch his sons be killed before they then gouged out his eyes. Then he and most of Jerusalem's survivors were led away in chains to Babylon as exiles.

II. God's Fulfilled Promise of "Those Days"

- ⊗ But there were still a few Israelites who placed their hopes in God's promises – those all the way back in Deuteronomy where God first promised He would care for and provide for those who obeyed Him and believed without question in His promise of a Savior to come.
 - ➔ These faithful believers would not be disappointed, because in spite of their present hardship, they clung to God's sweet promises. In spite of present hardship – and maybe partly because of present hardship – they set their hearts and faith, not on the things they were facing "right now", but on those days which were coming.
 - ➔ Just think of this: You and I, we will meet these faithful people in person, and we will actually rejoice with them, when? On that day ... when Jesus comes again to "execute" God's "justice and righteousness", as verse 15 promises; when Jesus brings us all before His throne as our King and Savior forever!

- ⊗ “The days are coming,” God promised through Jeremiah. And 600 years later they did; in God’s perfect timing. He caused new life to sprout up out of what had come to look like a cut off, dead stump of King David’s lineage.
 - ➔ That sprout was a real person, in human flesh; a baby with the name of Jesus; God’s very own Son. He came to the nation of Judah; to the city and the people of Jerusalem to fulfill every single promise God had made to them; the promises they had rejected.
 - ➔ He came and He conquered death, sin and hell in one saving sacrifice upon the cross. He restored the relationship between God and His people. He won the victory for God’s people over all their enemies – not just a victory for *these* days, but the once-for-all victory for those days; the days that span into eternity; the days that bring eternal security and eternal joy in an eternal kingdom for all believers of all time.
- ⊗ And here’s the cool thing, folks. “Those days” – Jesus’ days – are God’s source of true help and comfort for His people that now include those of us here who are living in faith in the days of 2024.
 - ➔ You see, while *those* days pointed people in our text forward to Jesus, they anchor you and me to *those* same days 2000 years ago when Jesus’ earthly life and saving work caused us to be saved for eternity as well.
- ⊗ That’s why the Christian Church observes a church year; a liturgical year; each year where we rehearse Christ’s life over and over again. From Advent and Christmas and Epiphany, to Lent and Easter, and Ascension and Pentecost, our Scripture readings and hymns work to direct our attention away from *these* days to the saving life and work of Jesus Christ in *those* days. This is how God teaches and tells us what days are truly the most important days for us. So, today on the First Sunday of Advent, we begin a new church year by fixing our eyes and setting our hearts, on “*those* days” of Jesus Christ.
 - ➔ *Those are the days* that truly matter most. When we hear directly from God’s Word about Jesus’ life 2000 years ago, we are embraced by God’s profound love for us in the challenges we face right now. As He feeds us His true body and blood given and shed for us upon the cross, we receive His forgiveness and strength for this life now and we proclaim His death for us until He comes. Yes, we live today in the victory of Jesus’ resurrection that He brought to us at the baptismal font, bringing us into His family by faith; wrapping us in His righteous deeds. As verse 16 says, because of Jesus, Judah would not only be saved, but Jerusalem – that is the people of God would receive a new name. They/we would receive His name; the name “Yahweh is our righteousness”; the name given to us then in *those* days.
- ⊗ Even though *those* days have come, in the grace of baptism, you and I today have a new name before God. He looks at us and sees the righteousness of His own Son wrapped around us. Marked upon our foreheads and hearts He sees the sign of Jesus’ cross placed there at baptism; proving that all of our sin and guilt died in *those* days with Jesus. And now, since *those* days of His resurrection; all who are baptized and therefore cleansed of sin are dripping with His righteousness today and into eternity.

Conclusion

- ⊗ Some days are more important than others, more outstanding, more special, more crucial. For those who know Jesus, *those* days, *His* days, are the most important of all.
- ⊗ I mentioned it quickly a few minutes ago. There is another great day; Jesus calls it “*that* day.” *That* day is still on the horizon, “coming soon”, Jesus promises in Revelation 22:20. It’s the day to which Jesus points us forward in today’s Gospel Reading; the day when people “will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Jesus says, “When these things

begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Lk. 21:27-28).

→ On *that* day, when Jesus comes again, He has promised to raise up all the dead and give eternal life and a place in His eternal kingdom to all who believe and trust in Him. On *that* day, all our troubles will be gone. Jeremiah will be there with all those who remained faithful to God and His promises throughout all the days of history and Jesus will reign there with His Father and the Holy Spirit, forever as our King.

✘ *Those* are the days that matter the most. Amen.