

First Sunday of Advent

December 2, 2018

Jeremiah 33:14-16:

“Security”

I. For Jeremiah's Time.

II. When Jesus Would Arrive.

III. Eternal.

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Avenue
Decatur, Illinois 62526*

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Dear Friends in Christ,

Steve May tells a story, from many years ago, about a young boy who walked into a drugstore and asked to use the telephone. This, of course, was before people were carrying their mind numbing entertainment centers in their pockets and purses. He asked the operator to give him a certain number. Here's the story:

"Hello, Dr. Anderson...do you want to hire a boy to cut the grass and run errands for you? Oh, you already have a boy? Are you completely satisfied with the boy you have? OK, then, good-bye, Doctor." As the boy thanked the pharmacist, the pharmacist said: "Just a minute, son. If you are looking for work, I could use a boy like you." "Thank you sir, but I have a job," the boy replied. "But didn't I just hear you trying to get a job from Dr. Anderson?" "No, sir," said the boy, "you see, I'm the boy who is working for Dr. Anderson. I was just checking on myself." (Steve May, *The Story File*, p. 287)

We would say that the boy was looking for job security. And, as it stands, *security* is a word with a number of implications. I can't count how frequently the words of the hymn, "Abide With Me" come to mind; these words: "Change and decay in all around I see." Change. Decay. Everywhere. The only things secure about this world are its insecurity and the grave.

And so, our overriding theme for these Sundays of Advent is "As You Prepare For Christmas Think On This." This first Sunday it's Think On . . .

SECURITY

I. For Jeremiah's Time.

God speaks through Jeremiah:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I make 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. (vv. 14-15)

"The days are coming" is a reference to the birth of Christ who would "execute justice"; namely, pay for our sin crimes at Calvary. "Execute righteousness" is the perfect obedience God demands from us. Christ would earn our obedience through His obedience. Through faith in what Christ did for us, God reckons us as righteous - obedient.

But in 586 B.C., centuries before Christ's birth, Jeremiah would live to see the most horrid destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians. Even before that he experienced imprisonment and rejection by God's people because of the Word of God! They didn't want to hear it! At the very beginning of his work God said to him:

...dress yourself for work; arise and say to them (God's people who wanted little to do with the Word and Worship of the Loving God) - (say to them) everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them...They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you. (Jer. 1:17-19)

Jeremiah saw the upheavals, the uncertainties, the insecurity of a world that defied God. Yet God would comfort him and the remnant of His people with a promise. Not a promise of this world's uncertain comforts, but the promise of the coming Branch, the Lord Jesus Christ!

In Isaiah 11, God revealed, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." Jesse was the father of King David and Jesus was a descendent of David according to the flesh. Jesus is the Branch. He is the One Who would enter our Monday through Sunday insecurities caused by our Monday through Sunday sin.

II. When Jesus Would Arrive.

In our text God goes on to say, "In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely." (v. 16a) Well, that brings us to a wall! Some 70 years after Jesus walked the earth Jerusalem and the Temple were once again destroyed and the Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. And with that there was the condition of the Roman Empire itself. While I will not vouch for his theology, Alfred Edersheim, a noted Jewish convert to Christianity who died in 1889, gave this fascinating description of the Roman world at the time of Jesus:

The citizens were idle, dissipated [decadent, self indulgent], sunken [a sense of dread]; their chief thoughts of the theater and the arena [entertainment, fun, escape], and they were mostly supported at the public cost...more than two hundred thousand persons were thus maintained by the State. (There was rapid decay of home life) partly from corruption, but chiefly from the increasing cessation of marriage, and the nameless abominations of what remained of family life...among the populace religion had degenerated into abject superstition. (Alfred Edersheim, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah")

And there's another wall. The Israel and Jerusalem that were carved out of the dust after World War II have been in constant conflict with the world! Unsettling, isn't it? It's the way the world was before Jesus was born into it, when He was born into it, and the way it is and the way it will be till the very end. Paul wrote to Timothy, to the church, to us: "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty...Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:1, 12-13) The security of this world is nothing but one sporadic and uncertain episode after another.

It should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit instructs the church, "Do not love the world (that is, do not sacrifice your spiritual well being for the world), or the things in the world...the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." (1 Jn. 2:15,17)

III. Eternal.

So, what is meant by "In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely"? Judah and Jerusalem are references to the church - to Jew and Gentile saved by grace through faith in Christ's saving us through His blood, death and resurrection. Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (the Gentile) have been brought near by the blood of Christ...For through him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:13 & 18)

Hopefully, we heard the word we need to hear from our text: "securely" as in "Jerusalem will dwell securely." The only security. The heavenly Jerusalem: It's ours now and forever.

And with all this is the Word that addresses the insecurities of this world: "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken...For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." (Heb. 12:28 & 13:14) And it would be wise to hold on to this Word in the midst of our doubts, what if's, and gut churning fears:

Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6)

In the Book of Revelation, chapter 18, is the account of the fall of Babylon; Babylon being synonymous with this world and its godlessness. The eighth verse reads, "For this reason (namely, her arrogance which sees no need for God) her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her." If the security we want is the security of this world, then God have mercy on us!

In the Book of Revelation, chapter 21, is the account of The New Heaven and the New Earth; the account of when this world ends and we will be standing in the unending security and love of God in Christ. We will see and forever be part of what John saw. You know these words. Carry them in your heart!

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man (His people!)...He will wipe every tear from their eye, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things (the sinful world and its diet of insecurities and death) have passed away." (vv. 1-4)

Think on this, as you prepare for Christmas....and eternity! And teach your children. Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott