

**THE LORD IS OUR COMFORT**  
**Sermon for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent, 2018**  
**Jeremiah 33:14-16**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before, Jeremiah 33:14-16: <sup>14</sup> **“Look! The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I shall fulfil the gracious promise that I have made to the family of Israel and to the family of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I shall cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and He will put justice and righteousness into effect in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which the city will be called: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Advent is a season of contrition and hopeful waiting. It invites us to reflect on the frailty of our fallen nature as we prepare to behold the mystery and wonder of God becoming flesh for us. We join with the people who were welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem by proclaiming, *“Blessed is the King who is coming in the name of the Lord! In heaven peace, and glory in the highest heavens!”* (Luke 19:38).

The first coming of Christ in the flesh, His atoning sacrifice on the cross, and His resurrection, were the beginning of eternal life and complete salvation. Yet history continues on in our time and in our midst. Far from stopping the course of history, Christ’s coming gave it a new impulse, and the world is moving closer toward its *fulfillment*. The Church of our time celebrates her expectation of the end, and it is a patient and serene hope because it rests on a past in which God has already shown His wonderful deeds. The marvellous act that God freely accomplished in Old Testament times in order to guide men’s hopes toward the kingdom are a pledge that has been confirmed by the first coming of Christ and by the new marvels which Christ performed and which foretell and prepare for the definitive kingdom that will be established at His second coming when sin and death will be no more.<sup>1</sup>

We eagerly await Jesus’ second coming, perhaps even more so now as we see a complete breakdown of society. Open homosexuality, gay unions, murder through abortion, a renewed push for euthanasia, and the acceptance of gender fluidity, are all evils in the sight of the Lord, and one has to wonder how long He will allow these things to go on. But not only this, there appears to be changes in nature. Severe droughts, increased heat, damaging hail storms, bushfires, and so on. The point is, there are so many trials and tribulations in the world, and while we can still find some comfort in earthly things, for example, it is good to go to bed of a night after a trying day, or to have a glass of cool, clean, refreshing water which quenches our thirst on a hot day, yet these comforts don’t last. Instead, the only thing in which we find lasting comfort is the fact that heaven awaits all of us, a place where no moth or rust can destroy, nor where thieves can break in and steal.<sup>2</sup> Heaven awaits, where we will be with Jesus for eternity. What great comfort this thought brings!

Our text today, Jeremiah 33:14-16 is a key portion of Jeremiah’s “Book of Comfort.” Chapters 30–33 see the restoration of Israel and Judah in the foreground with the restoration of mankind in the background. A precise dating is given in Jeremiah 32:1: *“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.”* This date is significant, for it places the passage just one year prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. To offer comfort and hope in this section, Jeremiah draws on many of the *prior* prophetic promises. The people will again possess the land that God promised to their forefathers (30:3). The people will again serve the Lord when He raises up David to lead them (30:9). The people will multiply and be God’s people even as He will be their God (30:19-22). Jeremiah’s words today describe the coming of the Messiah, who will redeem and restore God’s people. Jeremiah pointed to Him because in Him and upon Him all the promises of God rest and are secured. In Christ all the promises of God are “Yes” and “Amen.”<sup>3</sup> For that reason the words of Jeremiah show us Christ directly and clearly. To see Christ is to know God, to understand that His promises are sure, and to know that *all is well*.

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 21:4

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:19

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:18-20

This is comforting because, as we mentioned, there is so much that shakes up our world, and each of us is no doubt shaken in different ways by different developments in our lives. But it doesn't matter - whatever your anxieties, Jeremiah would understand your condition. After all, he was shaken by a number of things in his world.

First, God had called him to be a prophet and to speak God's Word in a time when people refused and resented God's messengers. At least twice there were attempts on his life.<sup>4</sup> The refusal and violent reaction to his message caused him great anguish. Jeremiah was frustrated because all his preaching had failed to produce repentance or any kind of turning toward the Lord. He knew that the Lord would keep His word and destroy the city. Because the people of Jerusalem had turned away, nothing could stop its destruction. As he had experienced the increasingly bitter opposition of his countrymen, he learned with sorrow that God's law does work wrath.<sup>5</sup> It drives the impenitent into even more ferocious hatred for God. Jeremiah had learned, to his sorrow, that for some the promise, the gospel itself, becomes "the smell of death."<sup>6</sup>

Jeremiah shares his frustration with us when he prays to God: "<sup>7</sup> *LORD, You have deceived me and I have let myself be deceived. You have overpowered me, and You have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long. Everyone mocks me.* <sup>8</sup> *Each time I speak, I cry out and proclaim, "Violence and devastation!" The Word of the LORD has brought me disgrace and derision all day long.* <sup>9</sup> *However, when I think, "I shall not mention Him or speak in His name any more," then His Word is like a burning fire in my heart, shut up in my bones. I wear myself out trying to hold it in, but I cannot do it,"* (20:7-9).

Thus, at the centre of Jeremiah's life - his very vocation - there was tension and rejection.

If the inner turmoil of his life was not enough, his world on the outside was about to collapse. The Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, were about to conquer Jerusalem and enslave its population. The glory of Jerusalem (Solomon's temple) would be flattened. Jeremiah was at the crossroads of this inner and outer world. He was called to announce that this would all happen because the people had so completely rejected the God who had given them the land, the temple, Zion, and Jerusalem.

What a situation! However unsettled we might be and whatever shakes us up in life, these forces do not surpass the internal and external challenges that faced Jeremiah. Unlike Jeremiah, we are not yet at the stage where we are threatened with death, although it might not be too far into the future where we will be, or at least, the demand made that we stop preaching against the wickedness of the world, and a day of coming judgment.

Into such a shaken world, God sends a remarkable word for Jeremiah and for each of us: "<sup>15</sup> **In those days and at that time I shall cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and He will put justice and righteousness into effect in the land.** <sup>16</sup> **In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which the city will be called: 'The LORD Is Our Righteousness.'**"

What is this but a calming, restoring, healing and refreshing word. A certain word. Indeed, it is more than a word. It is a change in reality. Jeremiah describes the coming of one who would reverse the curse of apostasy and idolatry. The Jerusalem that would experience violence, bloodshed, anguish, and enslavement would once again dwell in security and enjoy wonderful prosperity. God's blessings would be lavished upon her.

This great reversal would be brought about by the presence of the one who would bring **justice and righteousness**. David's seed, Jesus, fulfils this wonderful word precisely as Jeremiah promised. **The LORD Is Our Righteousness**.

One thing that everyone agrees upon when asked what they would like in this world is "security." The good news is that in Christ, you have profound and permanent security. And you are in Him not by your own effort, not by your own achievement, not by something you did or did not do. You are in Him - in David's Seed - for you were joined to His death and to His resurrection in your Baptism. Through Baptism you were buried with Him into death "*in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life,*" (Rom. 6:4). His death has done away with Israel's sin, Judah's sin, *your sin*. His resurrection has given you life that is in God - in the Father, in the Son, in the Holy Spirit - as the triune name was spoken over you. As the world continues its turning

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 11:21-23; ch. 26ff

<sup>5</sup> Romans 4:15

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:16

away from the Lord, and we too, foolishly let life's problems get us down, we must always remember that none of these problems, not even death itself, can conquer us, for our life is secure in the life of God.

Jesus' word is certain: *"I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die. Do you believe this?"* (Jn 11:25-26). That was the question Jesus asked Martha after Lazarus had died. Surely our answer, with Jeremiah, with Martha, is *"Yes, Lord, I have believed,"* (11:27). Martha said emphatically, yes, she believed, and she identified Jesus as the object of her faith. She believed He was the Christ. She believed He was the Son of God. She believed He was the one who was to come into the world. She was confessing Jesus as the Saviour sent from heaven. Such faith gave her the life that overcomes even death itself. Blessed are those who can answer as Martha did!

Yes indeed, the Lord is our comfort, our only full and lasting comfort. Nothing else in the world can give us that. Our comfort comes from the Lord, who comforts us in all our distress.<sup>7</sup> The Father *"did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all,"* and will also *"along with Him, graciously give us all things,"* (Romans 8:32). This comfort is there for every occasion.

Jeremiah spoke that message to his contemporaries. He faithfully spoke God's Holy Word. The majority rejected his message, but a significant minority listened and believed. They saw reality for what it was. They saw the beauty and wonder of the God of Moses and of Jeremiah. They confessed their sins and rejoiced in God's forgiveness for the sake of David's Seed, Jesus.

So, rejoice with Jeremiah. Beyond the disappointment and challenges of the world and all that beset us from within, beyond anxieties is security that is secure, the security that the Son of God, the Seed of David, brings and freely bestows upon us. Be at peace inside and as you meet the world on the outside, for you are secure in Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Almighty God and Father, we thank and praise You for Your promises of mercy and deliverance, which You have fulfilled in the coming of Your Son Jesus Christ. He is indeed the Light to reveal You to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

As Your faithful people in every age have believed Your Word, grant that we, too, may believe it, and one day inherit Your heavenly promises. As Your people of old looked forward with longing to the coming of the Messiah, grant that we, too, may joyfully welcome Jesus into our hearts, and be saved by Him from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

Lead us by Your Spirit to a deep awareness of our need of repentance. Teach us to hate what is evil and to love what is good. Strengthen us when our enemies try to lead us into sin. Direct our lives in ways that are holy and right, that we may serve and glorify You in all things.

Cause Your saving light to shine in all corners of the earth, that people everywhere may know Your love in Christ Jesus, and join that great number of Your people who say: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Grant peace to the nations of the earth. Look with special favour on our own country, and on all its citizens. Guide all who rule over us, that they may learn to know You as the only true God, and may seek to do Your will in all things.

Bless all who have gathered in Your house today to hear Your precious Word. Grant strength, comfort, and understanding to those who are sick or troubled, to those who are sad and depressed, to those who are enduring hardships, and to all others who are in any bodily or spiritual need. Grant them perseverance, and the joy of Your abiding presence.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who has come to deliver us, who has died to save us, and risen to justify us, and who is always alive to intercede for us. Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:3f

**1 Advent**

Jeremiah 33:14-16

<sup>14</sup> “Look! The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I shall fulfil the gracious promise that I have made to the family of Israel and to the family of Judah.

<sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I shall cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and He will put justice and righteousness into effect in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which the city will be called: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’”

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, concerning brotherly love you do not need anyone to write to you. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. <sup>10</sup> For, indeed, you are practising it toward all the fellow-Christians throughout Macedonia. However, we urge you, fellow-Christians, to progress more and more, <sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to live quietly, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, as we have commanded you, <sup>12</sup> that you may behave decently toward those who are outside and that you may have no lack of anything.

<sup>13</sup> Fellow-Christians, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, that you may not grieve like the others, who have no hope.

Luke 19:28-40

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had said this, He continued His way in front of them up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When He came near Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, as it was called, He sent two of His disciples. <sup>30</sup> He said,

“Go into the village ahead of you! As you enter, you will find a colt tied up on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it! <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it!’”

<sup>32</sup> The men whom He had sent went and found it just as He had told them. <sup>33</sup> While they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

<sup>34</sup> They said, “Because the Lord needs it.”

<sup>35</sup> They brought the colt to Jesus, put their garments on the colt and seated Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As He was riding along, people kept spreading their garments on the road. <sup>37</sup> As He was already coming near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully and loudly for all the miracles they had seen. <sup>38</sup> They said: “Blessed is the King who is coming in the name of the Lord! In heaven peace, and glory in the highest heavens!”

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd told Him, “Teacher, order Your disciples to be quiet!”

<sup>40</sup> He answered them, “I tell you, if these keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”