

December 2, 2018
The 1st Sunday of Advent :: HOPE

Jeremiah 33:14-16

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁴ **THE DAYS** are surely coming, says 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 live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Psalms 25:1-10

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
² O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O Lord! Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,

THE DAYS: This is an expression commonly used by the prophets indicating a prophetic and/or eschatological vision of time. It's synonymous with "in the last days" or "the day of the Lord" or "that Day" (in Luke 21). While it can refer to the "end times" (that what eschatological means) it also is most generally prophetic indicating in a time to come, or when the power of God enters into and reshapes the world.

the house of Israel and the house of Judah:

Jeremiah's ministry was from the thirteenth year of Josiah, king of Judah (626 BCE), until after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587 BCE. This period spanned the reigns of five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. The large unified nation of Israel had splintered into two nations about 100 years before Jeremiah's time: Israel was then known as the Northern Kingdom (with Samaria as its capital), whereas Judah was the Southern Kingdom (with Jerusalem as its capital). This was a time of unrest and uncertainty. The nation of Israel was conquered by the expanding Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE. Judah fell to the ascendant Babylonian Empire headed by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BCE at the battle of Carchemish in which Babylonia conquered the alliance of Egypt and Assyria (which whom Judah had sided). Jeremiah speaks these words of hope, vision and a future to a defeated people, exiled, divided, despairing, fearing or believing that the gods of foreign nations were more powerful and faithful than the God of the Bible.

a righteous Branch: Our scripture echoes a word given earlier in Jeremiah 22:5-6 "⁵ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" This new leader will continue the promise that David's royal line would continue (2 Samuel 7:16) and that through this leader God will "make a new covenant with the people of Israel, promising to put God's law within them, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jeremiah 31:33.

The Lord is our righteousness: **יְהוָה יִשְׁדָּקֵנוּ** pronounced as "Jehovah tsidkenu" or "Yahweh tsidqenu." The Jewish Talmud considered this name to be that of the Messiah (Christ).

and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Luke 21:25-36

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

²⁷ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ Then Jesus told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and **THAT DAY** does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

Advent means coming. It's a season when we look to the future coming or return of Christ and God's completion of the work began in Jesus with our feet planted in the present and looking back to the coming of God in the Christ child born in Bethlehem.

- **What grabs your attention in this reading?**
- **How are we in need of God to bring us salvation and safety through justice and righteousness as Jeremiah talks of?**
- **How do you struggle to find or see hope for the realization of God's righteous justice in our world? What pulls you from hope to despair? How does it blind you to God's hope-full activity in the world – in our world? How might you find encouragement and perseverance in this challenge to live into hope?**
- **What signs do you see of the coming of God's kingdom, like the sprouting leaves on a fig tree indicating the coming bounty?**

the Son of Man: In the Koine Greek of the New Testament, "the son of man" is "ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου" [ho huios tou anthropou]. The singular Hebrew expression "son of man" (בן-אדם i.e. [ben-'adam] also appears over a hundred times in the Hebrew Bible. In thirty two cases, the phrase appears in intermediate plural form "sons of men", i.e. human beings.

In the Christian scriptures, Jesus uses the reference for himself more than Son of God. Seemingly this self-identification corresponds with the use of this expression in the Book of Daniel of the Hebrew scriptures - Daniel 7:13-14 "As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed." It invokes an eschatological or apocalyptic coming of God in all divine glory in the person of the Son of Man to bring God's ultimate justice, redemption and completion of creation. The New Testament claims, in Revelation, that Jesus will come to earth on the "clouds of heaven," and that he will be given unending dominion and authority. It describes him as the "ruler of the kings of the earth," to be served and worshiped by all nations, people, and language groups.