

"Behold, the Days Are Coming!" -- Jeremiah 23:5-6

28 November Anno Domini 1999

Advent 1 - Ad Te Levavi

The Baptism of Chase Michael Clayton and of Jared Barker Luedtke

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Dear Children of the Family of Our Redeemer,

Six centuries before the Incarnate Son of God was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the prophet Jeremiah foretold of the Lord God's intentions to the people of God. The Lord God would render judgment on the wicked rulers and evil spiritual leaders of Judah; permit the nation to be defeated; and allow the conquerors to force-march the Hebrew people to a foreign land. Ultimately God would return His people from exile and raise up the Messiah - the promised Son of David.

The sermon text for this First Sunday of the Church year is Jeremiah 23:5-6. Hear this Word of the Lord God under the theme of ...

Behold, the Days Are Coming!

"Behold, the days are 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. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the Name by which He will be called: The Lord is our righteousness."

Thus far the Word of the Holy Spirit given through the prophet Jeremiah.

Behold, the days are coming! Now that is an announcement that can be good or bad, depending on the context. For example, those who are old enough will remember laughing at Ralph Cramdon's bluff to his wife on the television show called "The Honeymooners." He make a fist and shake it, saying, "One of these days, Alice, behold, one of these days, pow! right to the moon!"

But what Jeremiah is writing about is not intended to make us or the children of God chuckle. Indeed the situation was no laughing matter with the impending doom of being conquered and the judging hand of God at the gate. The nation was in moral decay, spiritual shambles, political corruption, idol permissiveness, mindless perversion and societal collapse. The shepherds of God's people play fast and loose with His Word, ignoring His will and abusing the people under their care. Adults snub their nose at God as if challenging him to act, and in doing so teach their children how to put off and ignore God. Or, in other words, it was very much like the way the political, social and spiritual climates are today in our world, civilization, nation and our neck of the woods. He warns us today just as He warned the people then, "One of these days, Judah, behold, one of these days, pow! right to Babylon!"

That is part of the Law message that the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed to the people. But that is not what our text is talking about today when, in the 5th verse, the Lord declares, "Behold, the days are

coming." No indeed, here Jeremiah gives us the Gospel ... the Good News that was proclaimed to the faithful of the Hebrew people as well as to us. The context of these words is one that will cause hope to live and joy to gladden the heart, even if the one who hears the words is in dire straits, personal tragedy, economic ruin, mental abuse, physical pain, marital struggles or a host of other afflictions.

Hope and joy when you hear the words, "Behold, the days are coming." It's the reaction you get when you tell a child, "Little one, look at the purple paraments; see the prophecy candle; join the congregation's Advent singing of *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*; touch this manger on your pastor's stole. "Behold, the days are coming."

Thus says the Lord, "... 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. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely." Here is the promise of the Savior, the virgin's son descended along David's family tree, the Son of God begotten from eternity. Jeremiah and the prophets tell us of this One Whose Advent sets His people free. He is called Emmanuel, God with us, the Prince of Peace Who will be born in Bethlehem of Judea. He has many names and God reveals a new name through Jeremiah, *And this is the Name by which He will be called: The Lord is our righteousness.*"

What wonderful news, dear people! You and I, who have no righteousness of our own, are given the privilege of calling God by His Name: *The Lord is our righteousness*. Without Him, our righteousness is that of filthy rags and getting dirtier all the time. We start out sinful and unclean and continue to decay and degenerate. The Lord's righteousness, however, is holy and perfect from everlasting to everlasting. God's righteousness is pure and without blemish. Christ Jesus died and rose again in order that you and your children might have His righteousness.

Behold, the days are coming when you will have babies and children. Do not delay in giving them the Gift of the Ages -- salvation, eternal life, forgiveness, paradise, peace with God, the blessing of being a child of God, heaven itself. And if God does bless you with children, be like those here today who care enough to bring them to Jesus. From Bethlehem's swaddling clothes to the tomb's burial cloths, Jesus earned the right for you and your children to be able to call Him by the Name: *The Lord is our righteousness*.

Jesus came as an infant to redeem infants and give them His righteousness in the crucifying waters of Baptism. A thoughtful, loving parent may carry a baby to the baptismal font in a white baptismal robe. That's fine; but it's not necessary. What's important is not what or who accompanies that child to the font. What's important is what God gives through the water and the Word in Holy Baptism. Behold, the day has come. The Lord God - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - has given His Word. On the way back to the pew, that baby now wears the robe of Christ's righteousness, earned in the Life and Death of Jesus; guaranteed in the Resurrection and Ascension of the Christ. That is exactly what has been given to Jared and Chase today. At night, whether that little one is sound asleep or wide awake, you may speak the God-given truth into that newborn's ear, *The Lord is our righteousness*. Amen.

"Behold, the days are coming, and little one, look at the purple paraments; see the prophecy candle; join the congregation's Advent singing of *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*; touch this manger on your pastor's stole. "Behold, the days are coming." Amen.