
Jeremiah 33:14-16. ¹⁴ "The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. ¹⁵ "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Held up by the Righteous Branch.

- 1. We are held up by a promise of deliverance.**
- 2. We are held up to live in cheerful anticipation of a better day.**
- 3. We are held up as an extension of his saving grace.**

The news of the day was deflating, to say the least. The proud city of Jerusalem was a shell of itself. The holy city had become a desolate place of disrepair and despair. God's judgment for Judah's rampant idolatry and unrighteousness was at hand and soon the holy city of Jerusalem would be handed over to the pagan Babylonians. It was just the beginning of a long awful road into exile. And yet even in those dark days, God's people had a real hope that they could hold onto, for God had not only warned his people of the coming destruction, but he had also promised restoration. In fact, in the misery of conquest and in the sinking feeling of impending defeat and exile, God had also commanded Jeremiah to proclaim, ***The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. ¹⁵ "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.***

In the midst of such sad circumstances it would have been easy for the people of Judah to give up hope. It would have been natural for these people to give themselves over to a life without hope and to be sucked down into the depths that such a hopeless existence might entail. What would it matter if they acted like those around them? What would it matter if they worshiped the LORD or followed the ways of their God anymore? But God, in his mercy, stretched out for them a branch that would serve to hold them up especially in this time of distress. This branch would save them from sinking down into the quick sand, the quagmire, the gaping pit of meaningless and hopelessness. In the midst of judgment God had given his people a message of deliverance and something wonderful to look forward to: restoration. And it would come from this righteous Branch from David's line. Deliverance from the unrighteousness around them would come from the Righteous One. It would come from the LORD and ultimately it would come from the Son of David, Jesus Christ our LORD.

God had promised to restore his people, to deliver them from exile, to bring them back into this land of blessing, and to give them a Savior that would restore their

relationship with God. And so as they were facing a world that seemed so hopeless, so dark and full of despair, an existence that threatened to sweep them away and drag them into hopelessness God's people were instead **held up by the righteous branch. They were held up by God's promise of deliverance. They were held up to live in cheerful anticipation of a better day. They were held up as an extension of his saving grace.**

In Jeremiah 33: 10 the LORD speaks about this hope of restoration that God had stretched out to his people. In these words God's prophet speaks so beautifully of the certain hope of a better day. ***'You say about this place, "It is a desolate waste, without men or animals." Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither men nor animals, there will be heard once more ¹¹ the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever."***

Give thanks to our God who keeps his promises. We are still just a few days removed from a day of national gratitude and so thoughts of thanksgiving are still fresh on our minds. And yet how quickly bright and cheerful thoughts of thanksgiving can be dampened and dimmed by the wickedness of this world. For the unrighteousness of the world often hangs over us like a heavy dark cloud. It can be difficult not to be sucked down into the despair and gloom and hopelessness that accompanies the personal anguish and the difficult news of the day. That could certainly be the case when the main headline of this Thanksgiving weekend had to do with a wicked attack on a place that housed its own unrighteous activities. Even though the motives of the recent attack on a Planned Parenthood facility in Colorado Springs are not yet clear, regardless, it is another appalling reminder of the bleak condition of this world. Confused souls stumble about in this world that is so lacking in righteousness. Violent evil, wrapped in a cloak of twisted righteousness, has now led to a violent crime, and that violent crime has indirectly led to the wickedness of abortion being defended and supported. In the wake and as a result of this wicked act of violence, this center that houses the unrighteousness of abortion saw increased funding and support as a slew of donations and other demonstrations of support were given. Such a tangled web of sin could quickly drag us down leaving us sickened, saddened, and discouraged. Evil piled up upon evil and it weighs on us.

And yet, as this weighs on us, as we are in danger of sinking down into hopelessness and despair, God extends to us a message of deliverance. God will deliver his people. Our Savior will come again to deliver us from this world of unrighteousness. He will come again to bring us to our home of eternal purity and perfect righteousness. Yes, God reaches out to us in the midst of this unrighteous world with a precious branch so that we may hold to the hope that he freely gives. We are not swept away by the ongoing landslide of sin, we are not lost and carried away by the constant flow of evil around us, but we are **held up by our God's precious promise of deliverance.**

"The days are coming... I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness." The days are coming. Deliverance from the atrocities of this world are

coming. One day, all of God's people will live in the safety and serenity of heaven. One day we will be delivered from the evil and unrighteousness of this world. But let us not forget that we are not exactly righteous either. We don't always see our own sins in the way that God's Word and the prayer of the day calls us to see them. Our sins are dangerous and deadly. Our sins are dangerous and damning, but all too often we shake them off as no big deal. We rank other sins, and the sins of others, as far worse than ours as we try to slyly sweep our offenses under the rug or at least to a place where we don't have to look at them. Our sins are not something that we can casually sweep away, they are threatening and dangerous. Because of these sins God could and should judge us for all eternity. He should punish us. He should sweep us away in a landslide of eternal judgment. And yet in his love he personally extends to us deliverance. He extends to us that same Savior that he sent for the people of Israel and Judah. He sent Jesus to be your Savior who lived a perfectly righteous life for you and then died in your place. God sent you a Savior, just as he promised; from the house and line of David; a righteous branch, from that stump of Jesse. God preserved his chosen people for this very purpose. He would bring them back from exile. He would preserve a remnant from his fallen nation, he would restore his people to the land that he promised them, for the very reason of sending his promised Messiah through them. They would be an extension of his grace. God would not let us, his people be swept away by the constant flow of unrighteousness, he would not let you and me sink away in despair and hopelessness. He would extend to us his grace. He would send his Son to us through the line of David. ¹⁵ ***"In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.***

We give thanks for the salvation that we enjoy through Jesus now, and we look forward to the day of our final redemption. The days are coming, the Lord declares. At this time of the year we start to count the days, don't we? With Thanksgiving come and gone it is the accepted norm that we anticipate and prepare for Christmas. We are now starting to count the days until we reach that day of special celebration, and for good reason. God in his love sent his Son to save us, and Jesus came. God's Word tells us that he came as that holy child born of a virgin, born without sin who came to save us who were so full of sin. He came as that tiny child and the Scriptures reveal how he grew to be a man who did so much good. The God-man Jesus Christ was perfectly kind and compassionate. He was perfectly generous and full of love, and yet he was perfectly uncompromising as he stood on God's Word of truth. He spoke against sin. He called people to repentance and all the while he lived a perfect and righteous life. He did just as Jeremiah had foretold. ***He will do what is just and right and the land.*** In this world full of unrighteousness he was the only who was ever truly righteous. And in his righteousness he proclaimed God's Word of salvation. He spoke of sin, he spoke of judgment, but he himself would provide the solution, a perfect sacrifice that would save us.

As we eagerly anticipate Christmas this is to be the center of our preparation. Jesus Christ came as the Savior of the Word. He came to be perfect in our place, he came to lay down his innocent life for us. He came to be the LORD our righteousness.

With obvious and eager anticipation we prepare for that day of Christmas. The

message and certain hope of Christmas lifts us up and makes our days seem a little lighter and brighter. The message of Christ's second coming has the power to do something very similar. Jesus is coming again. He will deliver us from this world of sin. This is a message that has the power to bring joy to our hearts. And so this message not only lifts us up out of despair and hopelessness, but it is a message that fills us with obvious hope that will be seen in the way that we live our lives. Through Word and Sacrament Jesus gives us a message of wonderful assurance that holds us up in cheerful anticipation of a better day.

Even when the world around us appears so hopeless and full of evil and sin, we as believers are held up by our Righteous One so that we may live hope filled lives of goodness and love. We are held up by that righteous branch to live in his love, to live lives of kindness and generosity and eternal joy. We are encouraged to resist the ways of this world and walk in the righteousness of Christ, as we thankfully follow the one who came to save us with his perfection. Knowing the goodness of Christ will chase away the darkness of sin. The heavy gloomy clouds of hate and violence, anger and disgust that so easy collect in our hearts and darken our lives will be replaced by the sure hope and bright light of Christ's love. For we have been lifted up and rescued by the Righteous Branch, Jesus Christ.

He may even use us, his church, to reach out to others who are in danger of being swept away. Did you notice the pronoun that seems a bit out of place in verse 16? ***16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.***” Not only is this passage talking about Christ, but God promises to use his church to bring about his promise of safety and salvation. Christ is the Righteous One, but we are extension of our Savior. We are the Body of Christ, we are his Church. He has placed his name on us, he has declared us righteous, and Christ our Lord uses us, his people, as an extension of his grace as we reach out into our communities with this message of salvation. He uses us, his church, to reach out to those in our community and those in our personal life with the good news that saves those who are perishing. He uses us, his church, as an extension of his grace to extend his gift of eternal life. And so as an extension of this righteous, saving, branch let us warmly and freely invite our family and our friends, our associates and neighbors to come and hear this good news of salvation. And what a better time of the year to do this than at Christmas time!

Yes, the news of this world can be deflating. The constant flow of evil, the unrighteous exploits of the world around us, our own sinfulness all threaten to drag us down into lives of hopelessness and all that such a meaningless life would entail. But instead we are spared by the Righteous Branch of Jesus Christ. Our lives are given hope and meaning. Yes, Jesus the righteous branch rescues us as **he holds us up by his promise of deliverance, and he lifts us up each day so that we may live in cheerful anticipation of a better day. He lifts us up as an extension of his saving grace.** May God bless us to this end. Amen.