

A Righteous Branch  
Jeremiah 33:14-16  
November 28, 2021

Today we move on to the Old Testament lesson. Last Church year we were in the Psalms. This Church year we will be in the Old Testament lessons looking to see how Jesus is not only the focus of the New Testament but also the Old. You may be saying, Jesus wasn't born yet, so how could it be about Jesus?

The texts could be about Jesus because just after Adam and Eve took from that tree and ate, God came looking for them, not to kill them on the spot but to give them hope in spite of what they had done that came with the promise they would die.

They had gone against God but He had mercy on them and gave them a new promise and that was as of a Son would come who would make things right. They and generations after them would look to the coming of this Son. As we see from Jeremiah, in his day, they were still looking for someone to deliver them. Especially since much of the nation was carried off to Babylon. They were in need of some hope even though they had done wrong and were now under the thumb of some foreigners.

So, Jeremiah prophesies the coming of a righteous Branch, to spring up from David. We have all heard of someone rising up from the stump of Jesse, David's dad. It seems Jeremiah is continuing on with the sprouting up thing with the springing up of a righteous branch.

If we were to look at a sprout from a stump. It takes awhile before that sprout will "sprout" branches. So, among all those branches that resultant tree will bring forth, there will be one, one that will be a righteous branch that will execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Jeremiah goes on to write that in those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem which is in that saved territory will dwell securely. As the city was being overrun, it wasn't secure, in fact it was anything but secure but we can imagine those who were exiled were looking for the day when things could get back to normal.

It would be a few years, in fact a few decades before there would be a return. Yes, most of those who were taken away would never come back, they would die in exile. They would die, never seeing the restoration that would come. They would not see the restoration or the day the righteous Branch came.

Adam and Eve didn't see that day, neither did Abraham or Moses or Jeremiah, no it would not be until after the Prophets were silent for hundreds of years that the promise would come to fruition.

We know this prophecy is pointing to the coming of Jesus. He was the righteous branch out of all the branches that would spring up. He was of the line of David, both on Mary's side

and Joseph's side, even though Joseph wasn't His blood father. Jesus came to bring peace for not only Judah and Jerusalem but for the whole world.

You might be thinking that within about 40 years of Jesus dying, rising from the grave and ascending to heaven, there wouldn't be peace in Judah and Jerusalem would fall to the Romans. Yet, even in that fall, there was peace in Christ. Yes, in spite of a world of turmoil, in the face of death, there was peace, knowing that Jesus the Messiah had come and paved the way to heaven by His adopting all who believe into His family. Even though death might await there was something greater in store for all who believed.

Jesus, the righteous Branch from the line of David sprung up that night in Bethlehem. Angels proclaimed His birth. The shepherds came to see Him. The wise men traveled, many miles to honor Him. All this took place as the promised Son, born of a woman, was now here, on this earth to take on sin and win.

A little hard to see in a little baby boy. Yet there was something different about Him as Mary knew, knew He was different, yet she pondered all these things in her heart, right up to the cross, thinking He was not who He was supposed to be and yet, He was just who He was supposed to be, the Savior of the world.

He is that branch that is our righteousness. He, the Lord, is our righteousness.

The Son was promised to Adam and Eve that would make things right with God once again. Adam and Eve were righteous before they took from that tree and ate. It all changed with that act, that denial of what God had given them as if it wasn't enough, as if they knew better and they could do as they wanted.

They lost their righteousness, their rightness before God. So then God made the promise to make it all new again in a Son. Jesus brought that rightness with God back, as He paid the price for it, that high price of His very life.

We look to **THAT** righteousness for it can only be had through Him, that righteous Branch, the fulfillment of the promise made to the house of Israel, God's chosen people and to the tribe of Judah.

You look to that righteousness but what about the world around you? Where do they look to for righteousness? Have you ever asked anyone if they are a good person? What are most people going to say? Yes, they say. Why? Because they are comparing themselves to others who the whole world would say are evil or had done things that aren't right.

The problem with that kind of comparison is, they don't think that a God of love would demand perfection. They think God grades on a curve and they are counting on a passing grade to take them through to the end where the Lord will welcome them with open arms to heaven.

You don't think that way or do you? Do you look to your baptism certificate or the fact that you are Lutheran to give you entrance into heaven? You say you don't believe that and yet as more than one person has said that if people were to look at you and your works, would there be enough evidence to prove that you are who you are as a Christian?

How many of you think you are a good person? Does your thought go to thinking you are better than someone or a whole lot of someones? Where should your thoughts go to that question? It should go to those times when you have not lived up to the perfection that God demands. You are sinners, we all are and there is no way we can measure up. None of you, none of us deserve what is in store for us. Because that is the case, we all need to focus on something, Someone, beyond ourselves and that is the Righteous Branch, that sprout from the stump of Jesse, your Savior and mine, and the answer is . . . Jesus.

Jesus. The name that is above all names. That at that name, everyone is going to bow, even under the earth. He is what this is all about from the Old Testament to the New Testament to your testament. For without that Righteous Branch, who are you? One of a few billion? Yet because of that Righteous Branch, you have been adopted into His family, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Those under so much pressure with so many questions about the future were told of a future that included one to come. They didn't know when the Bridegroom, the Righteous Branch would make His appearance. They only had the promise, the dream of one day all these would see freedom as the norm. They had in their minds how the future could look bright and yet they found themselves under the thumb of another nation, not their own.

Jeremiah was told of another. One to come, one with the promise that He, the Righteous Branch would come in and save the day, executing justice and righteousness in the land. He would usher in the salvation of Judah, not one from the line of Levi the priest but Judah so that those living in the great city, the city where the temple resided, where God resided would be a city where its citizens would dwell securely.

Saved, dwelling securely without the situation they found themselves in. Was the prophesy of Jeremiah just some hot air or was this great dream possible, a promise to come true?

It is a little hard to put their shoes on. We live in the nation of the land of the free and the home of the brave. We don't live under another nation's rules or their so called gods. No, we are still a nation where the first amendment, it is the first for a reason, the first amendment guarantees, in its very first sentence of that amendment, this: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

We are guaranteed by that first amendment, freedom to worship God, that Righteous Branch as our God. He is the one who has given us a greater freedom than is listed even in that first amendment. He has given you freedom from your sins.

Even if you were to find yourself in prison. If by some turn of events, this nation would no longer be under the constitution but under another ruler, some king or despot, that freedom can not be taken away. No, you have freedom that doesn't depend on anything or anyone of this earth. No, your freedom depends on the Righteous Branch who has placed on you the white robe of righteousness that is yours by His free gift to you.

What you have been given is to be shared with all. You have that gift but it is up to you to use that gift and not bury it, knowing the one who gave it to you is coming back and you don't want anything to happen to your gift.

We know how the owner dealt with that one. The others were blessed, this guy was not. He was expected to use what he was given to make even more than he was given. The owner got back what He had put into it, didn't he? Why so upset? He knew the talent he put in the guy's hands would benefit many others and yet it was hidden, left to sit it out, not get involved in the guy's world.

God got involved with His people. He had a foreign nation come in and remove people from their homes and put them under a thumb of slavery. Why, because they decided that all that the Lord had blessed them with was all they needed. It was as if they buried who they were supposed to be. They were to be the children of God to shine a light to the Gentiles and they hid their lamp under a bushel. In fact they turned down their lamp to where it didn't shine with the truth of the one true God but was a lamp that didn't shine much.

The Lord had chosen them and they thought the things of this world were too much of an enticement and followed the things of this world and didn't look to God. Oh, they went through the motions but were, as Jesus said of the Pharisees, were whitewashed tombs.

We think of the Israelites as God's chosen people, but they rejected their position, they turned their back on God and the Righteous Branch that sprang up in Judah. He came to that little town in Bethlehem to be born to that woman promised to Adam and Eve and the devil.

The promised one, the Righteous Branch of Jeremiah's day has brought salvation. His place of dwelling is secure, ready to be inhabited by all those who, by the Holy Spirit saw the freedom that awaited them because the Righteous Branch chose them to be part of His family.

Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament and the New. He is to be your focus and mine. As we focus on Him and His work on our behalf, may we make it our life's work to be about our Brother's business of bringing the Good News we have been given to others, others He puts into our lives. We have been grafted into Him, may He give us what we need to produce a bounty.