

The Days Now, and Yet to Come

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Ebony West

Texts: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Good Morning.

Not only do I have the privilege of delivering a sermon for the first time in a UCC congregation, but on the first Sunday of Advent! Rev Dan decided to just toss me into the ocean and I'm ok with it! To be 100 percent honest, what makes this such a treat is that I have never in my past congregations truly celebrated the season of Advent. So, I would like to thank you all for your warm embrace and teaching me something new about the Body of Christ! Here's what have I learned so far about Advent! Every website and book I turned to starts off by saying it stems from the Latin word of ad venio, meaning "coming" or "until the coming". What a perfect term to describe this season, Amen? I have learned it is the four weeks leading up to the birth of Christ, and yet, Christ is already here. Christ is walking with us, talking with us, cheering us on and leading the way for us while shining a light as we go. And yet, we are still in the season of waiting for the celebration of the Lord's arrival. Already here. . . not yet there.

Of the four Sundays leading up to the birth of Christ we light a candle for each theme, today being hope. There is a lot of hope packed into the text of Jeremiah this morning.

In the first portion of the scripture in verse 14, it states "*The days are coming*", declares the Lord, "*when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.*" Notice, this is the Lord talking here. And the Lord is immediately offering hope in these words, "*The days are coming*". During the season of Advent, we are in the mindset of expectation, anticipation, and preparation as we should be! Why? Because the Lord said, "*The days are coming*". And this is God's way of telling us that we need to be in expectation of something that has been prepared for *us*. Something that God has manifested and spoke into life...for *us*. If we keep going, the Lord says "*when I will fulfill the good promise . . . I made to the people of Israel and Judah.*" There surely is no greater hope, than that which is made by the Lord alone. But see, while there is hope in this verse, it is also paired with some tension. We are told the days are coming, and we are told the Lord's promise will be fulfilled. As I said earlier, during the season of Advent, we are to be in the mindset of expectation, anticipation, and preparation. But what happens if

we are caught up in expectation and anticipation? If we are so focused on the hope of what is coming that we forget to stop and admire the journey along the way? It is essential to remember that while we are waiting for Christ to come that we do not turn from what is already here, that we do not miss the potential blessings prepared for us prior to the coming of Christ. Already here...not yet there.

While I was thinking and praying on this message for today, I was reminded of a scene from the movie, *Pursuit of Happiness*. Christopher, played by young Jaden Smith, was walking with his dad, and telling him this joke that fits a little too well with the message we are reflecting on today. He starts the joke by saying that there is a man who is drowning in the ocean. Then this big boat comes with a man on it asking if needs any help. The drowning man says, “No thank you, God will help me.” Then there is a second boat! The same question is asked to the drowning man, do you need any help? He responds again with “No thank you, God will save me.” And then he drowns. He goes on to glory, stands before God, and asks God, “God, why didn’t you save me?” My favorite part is the ending where God says, “I sent you two big boats you dummy!”

Here, we have a message on what can happen if we get so caught up in the anticipation of hope, we miss our chances of entering into the boat. We run the risk of drowning, Meaning, by waiting on what is yet to come, if we are not careful, we can miss what is already here. First Church, I have come to tell you that God wants us to get into the boat. Yes, there is something at the end of this season of Advent for us. It is promised to us right here in the beginning of verse 14. However, there are multiple, multiple, stops worth seeing along the way.

So, I ask, how do you see us preparing as we are in this waiting season of Advent? How do we ensure this congregation as whole takes the time to see the multiple stops along this journey as we wait for the next set of promises we know are coming? And how do we know they are coming? Just as the beginning of verse 14 starts with the declaration of “*The days are coming*”, we see in verse 15 how it starts signifying the future to be of what the Lord has promised as well.

It reads, “*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.*” Here we are again, as the Lord is declaring what is to be done *in those days and at that time*. This is God’s proclamation to us, that the day

has been selected, the alarm clock has been set. The second part of this verse I want to focus on is where it says *he will do what is just and right in the land*. Let's back up a little bit and take a look at what's going on in the text during this time. We have the city of Jerusalem, and they are being attacked by the hands of the Babylonians. Why? There was evil and wickedness in the land of Jerusalem. Therefore, Jeremiah was sent by God to prophesy the destruction of the city, yet no one believed him and tossed him into confinement. And then what happened? The Babylonians did exactly what was prophesied. God brought punishment, yes. But more than anything, God wanted to bring restoration. God wanted to bring comfort. God wanted to bring *hope*. For a new and righteous land, served by a holy and righteous leader. In those days, and at that time, he will do what is just and right in the land.

In this time that we are in now, in mid-pandemic. We know the outcome. We are seeing better days. We have the promise of God before us as God says *The days are coming. The days are coming*. We are wanting to hurry and leave this season where our world is still in this pandemic, but First Church, how do we prevent ourselves from missing the boat of lessons along this journey we are in? In what ways are we collectively coming together to be in preparation for our Lord. We're wanting to remove masks and carry on with how life was before, wanting justice to be served where it belongs and should be, waiting for the sweet, sweet day of the Lord's arrival. But meanwhile, God is doing something behind the scenes. The Lord's presence is here. Roaming and working on our behalf. And we just have to make sure we hold on to that hope and hop on that boat. We're already here...just not yet there.

In the final verse of our text this morning, for a third time, we are reminded of the days to come. And this time the Lord is telling us that "*In those days, Judah will be saved.*" In those days, First Church. I'm actually taking elementary Greek this semester. With that being said, please pray for my sanity! Something the Greeks are really strict on are tenses and the voice used in sentences. We've been learning about the present tense, the past tense, something called an aorist tense, which is a fancy way of stating the past. But then there's the future tense. And the future tense is split into two parts. You have your future less vivid, where something is not really likely to happen. So, you have sentences that have words such should

and would. "If I *should* do this then that *would* happen. Then there is the future more vivid. Where something *is* going to happen. If I do this, then this *will* happen. In all of these verses First Church, all I see are future MORE vivid sentences! Something *is* going to happen! The days are coming! In those days and at that time! And in those days, Judah will be saved! And what does this text end with? *This is the name by which it will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior!* We are given hope in these words. We are given the promises of our Lord to come. We know what we are waiting for but know that the Lord is here now, our promises are being fulfilled now. By keeping that hope in us, let us not miss what is meant to be gained along the way.

Let it all be done in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Amen.

