

Jeremiah 33:14-16 ¹⁴ 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: ¹⁵ 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 ⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? ¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Luke 21:25-36 ²⁵ " And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. ²⁷ "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." ²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ³⁴ " But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Today rather than focusing on one particular text of the three, I thought we would actually take a look at all three texts. Don't worry; the net result is not a sermon which is

three times as long. But today as we officially enter into Advent, it is appropriate that we remember exactly what Advent is all about. The word advent means “coming.” And that is our focus for the next several weeks, Jesus’ coming. But to be fully accurate our focus will be on three of Jesus’ comings during this season. We will remember that He came, He comes and He is coming.

First, today as we enter into a new church year, we begin to once again walk our way to a manger in Bethlehem. We ponder the wonder of Christ’s first coming into this world. Our Old Testament text helps focus us on that event. The Israelites had been expecting for quite some time the one who would come to crush Satan’s head as God had promised way back in the Garden of Eden. From that day of that promise onward, they had always expected the One who would fulfill it. But time and time again those they hoped might be the Messiah had fallen short for one reason or the other. Never did the man equal up to the Messiah. Even in Jeremiah’s day, they still were expecting this One to come. And their hope was renewed as Jeremiah spoke the words of our text. He said that one would come, a branch of righteousness, who would grow up into David’s rule and reign. This one would reign over Israel. No, God hadn’t forgotten His promise. The one to crush Satan’s head would still come. And we know that He did come. God in the flesh, Immanuel, Jesus. And when He came, He fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah. He came to save Judah and make Jerusalem dwell in safety. He is the One who came that by his death and resurrection we might have eternal rest as His people. It would take several hundred more years before he arrived on the scene after this prophecy of Jeremiah, but he was well worth the wait.

Secondly, as we think about Jesus' comings this advent season it is also appropriate that we ask one other question. How does Jesus today fulfill his promise to be with us always even to the very end of the age? How can he accomplish this even after His ascension into heaven? Paul, in our epistle text for today, talks about His desire to come and see the Thessalonians. But it is not Paul's coming that we wish to ponder today. Rather He says that he wants to come and be with the Thessalonians and perfect what is lacking in their faith. How would Paul do that? With a magic wand or a spell? Of course not, He would bring the Word of Jesus to them. That would perfect their faith. So also, we especially in this season remember those ways in which God comes to us to perfect our faith. He comes to us also through His Word. He came to us with his Word drenched in water on the day of our baptism. He comes to us as we read or hear His Word proclaimed and His Absolution delivered. And He comes to us with his Word in bread, wine, body, and blood each time we receive Him in the Supper. On Communion Sundays, we sing words more than appropriate for this season of Advent. We sing, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." Yes, there in the Supper under the forms of bread and wine, Jesus comes to be really present with his church. There He comes in ever true and real sense. Yes to be in God house is a joy for us as Christians, because of one reason. Here week after week Jesus comes to us. He comes to us in his Word. He makes his advent to us his people.

The last coming that will be our focus throughout this season is the one that we have been focused on at the end of the church year as well. Not only did Christ come in Bethlehem, not only does He comes to us in Word and Sacrament, but He also shall come again to restore all things and take His people home with Him to heaven. Yes, in Luke

our Lord assures us that although this world shall not endure, His Word will endure forever. Just like our text last week assured, Jesus salvation is eternal for those who believe. As His chosen people, we are called to be ever watchful, always praying that God will deliver to us on that great day of the Lord not wrath but mercy, not punishment, but reward. Yes, when that great day comes our redemption will be complete. We are to be reminded in this season that the signs of the end times have been occurring for quite some time. We should know that the time is drawing near. Certainly we are one day closer to our Lord's return today than we were yesterday. As we sit on this side of the empty tomb, we await Christ second coming with the same anticipation that Simeon in the temple awaiting Christ's first coming. We long to behold with our own eyes that which we have believed in our hearts. We long to see our Lord in the flesh. And at His return we will. We in our resurrected bodies, and He is his, shall see one another face to face. Then will our joy be made complete.

The danger for us in this advent season is if we stop being captivated by any of his comings. If the Christmas story becomes just a beautiful cute story we hear at this time of year, rather than an event in which we see God coming down to dwell among us for our salvation, we will not have the full benefit of this advent season. If we come to the communion rail or listen to God's word without much thought, we can deny the very means by which God wishes to come to us again this season. And if we don't take seriously the fact that Jesus may return, we can slip in a spiritual sleep of unbelief which will leave us unprepared when He does arrive.

Really, advent helps us do something that we should do every day, focus of Jesus and the ways in which He has come, comes and will come again.

Oh sure, everyone gets ready for Christmas. Lights go up, houses are decorated, travel plans are made, and gifts are purchased. But for us Christians this time before Christmas is about more than preparing for the celebrations of Christmastime. Rather, we in this advent season prepare to re-witness our Lord's first coming, gather to receive His coming to us each week in His Word, and await His second coming. We lift our eyes from all the blinking lights to the skies above and await our salvation. We sing anew, "Oh come, Oh come Emmanuel." Amen.