

**“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.**

<sup>15</sup> **“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. <sup>16</sup> 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.’** (NIV84)

Theme: A Branch is Coming

1. He Comes from David
2. He Comes with righteousness.

Why do you enjoy the most about Christmas? Each person has his own favorites. But often, people enjoy Christmas because it’s different. It’s a break from the everyday lives. It is a time to spend around friends and family. You get to open presents. It is a bright day in an otherwise gloomy season during the long winter months. From the moment the turkey is finished people look forward to and long for Christmas. It allows them to put aside their forgetful or disappointing lives to think about something good and fun for a change. For these reasons and many more people look forward to the coming of Christmas.

During the season of Advent we also look forward to Christmas, but not for the same reason as the rest of the world. We look forward to Christmas because the Savior will be born for us. That same Savior who will return again on the Last Day. So we don’t focus on earthly things during the weeks leading up to Christmas, but on the Branch who is coming. For he comes from David and he comes with righteousness.

When Jeremiah spoke the words of our text he was confined in a courtyard in Jerusalem. God had Jeremiah prophecy about the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The Babylonians were going to destroy the city. And all the people were going to be taken into exile. Jeremiah said what they people didn’t want to hear. So the leaders of Jerusalem imprisoned him. A our text for today is taking place, the city was

under siege. It would be for over two years. Its destruction was imminent. But the people pleaded to be saved along with their city. So God once again came to Jeremiah. He said the same thing he had been saying all-along. Jerusalem would be destroyed. Many people would be taken into exile. Everyone else will be killed. This was going to happen because of their wickedness. They brought it upon themselves. Perhaps the worst news at all is what God told the people through Jeremiah at the end of verse five. **I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness.**

This was the third time the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem. A good amount of people had already been already killed. Others taken to exile. The streets were bare. Those that remained, struggled to survive. All they wanted was for it all to be over. They longed for better days.

We too long for better days. This world is not always a pleasant place to live. People we love let us down. Those we are close to get sick and die. You yourself get sick. You’re not able to do things you were once able to do. The economy is not the best. Perhaps you are without a job, or without a job that you enjoy. You are barely able to make ends meet. All around us horrible things happen. It seems as if the core values of the world are changing—and for the worse. Or perhaps your concerns are less involved. It’s cold and dark most of the time—and soon snow will blanket the ground. Your sick of school or work, and you just can’t wait for Christmas to get a little break. You long for a better time. You don’t really care what it is, you just want some relief. A few days off of doing homework. A long weekend to rest your weary mind or body. You don’t want to worry about money any longer. You don’t want any worries whatsoever any longer. You want your pain and sickness to go away. You wish that your loved ones never died. You simply desire relief from your pain. You long for better times.

The longing of the people of Jerusalem was answered by God. God promised to watch over them and protect them. They would not be completely destroyed. Even though they would be taken into exile they would still remain a people. God promised to bring them home. After 70 years in exile God would lead his people back to Jerusalem—

back to their home and the Promised Land. And even though the streets of Jerusalem were bare, and soon to be destroyed, they would once again be filled with people, laughter, and kids playing. For God would rebuild the cities. The temple would be restored. Shepherds would once again tend to their flocks in the fields outside of the city. For there will be no war.

But God had more in store for the Israelites. He was going to send a Savior. **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.** As great as it was going to be for those people of Jerusalem to be back home, to live in safety, and free from of fear from the enemies, God points a much better time. The Messiah would come. Calling the promised Savior a branch was quite common. It is something that the Israelites instantly understood. David's monarchy would be cut off. At the time of the exile there would be not be another king descended from David. It was a dead stump. But from that dead and cut-down stump a new branch would shoot up. And this branch would become even greater than the original tree. Isaiah says something similar in chapter 11. **A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.**

This prophecy, of course, is fulfilled in Christ. He was a descendent of David. Jesus was born of a virgin mother—a descendent of David, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit. God became man—God and man at the same time. The people of Jerusalem longed for this righteous Branch to come. And he was far greater than anything they could have ever imagined. He would usher in a time greater than they could ever imagine. For he would come to save them from their sins. Better times were certainly coming for the Jews. And also for us. Because Jesus is God he is called the Righteous Branch. For he is righteous or holy. There is nothing sinful about him. He never did anything wrong. No deceit is found in his mouth. No one can accuse him of any wrong doing. And this Branch would bring something to the land that they hadn't seen. He would do what was just and right.

But Jesus doing what was just and right means more than punishing the evildoer and rewarding the good. It means that he saves us. It means that he would make us righteous or holy. And that is why we long for the coming of this Branch.

Yet there are many things to distract us along the way. Especially in the days leading up to Christmas. Even during the season of Advent—when we are waiting for Christ's arrival, our eyes are taken off of Christ. The devil tries to get our focus off of the Savior to be born, and on to the things of this world. Instead of preparing our hearts and minds for Christ's birth and his return, we get sidetracked by the month of December and all that comes along with it. We have to figure out what presents we are going to buy—and how to pay for them. There are parties to attend. Family get-togethers at which you have to make an appearance. Our children are in secular concerts, programs, or games. All of this and much more on top of an already busy schedule.

All of this serves to take our focus off of Christ leading up to Christmas. Many of these events fill up your schedules. Soon you don't have time to think about Christ's coming and why he had to come in the first place. Reading God's Word is pushed aside when you are too busy. Attending a Bible Class doesn't fit into your schedule. You other things to do than worship God. And you feel compelled to do what is on your schedule—even if it conflicts with God's Word. The devil is a master manipulator. He uses the business of our lives leading up to Christmas to get our minds off of Christ.

For this we go before God on bended knee. We confess our sins. And we long for a better time. We long for a time when we will not be guilty of sin. That is why God sent his Son Jesus. The righteous branch, that holy branch, makes us righteous. He makes us holy. For doing what is just and right means that Christ gave us the righteousness he demands. He gave us his perfect life. The death he suffered through he credited to us. He satisfied the justice of God. Through Christ's death and resurrection he made his righteous in God's sight. We weren't always looked at this way. When we were born we were nothing but sinners. We were rebels against God. We couldn't do anything to please him. We were on our way to eternal damnation. So God sent Jesus. And he made us holy in God's sight.

Now when God looks at us he doesn't see poor miserable sinners. He sees us as holy and righteous. For Christ has given us his perfection—his holiness is now ours.

And so this righteous Branch saves us. He removes the guilt of all our sins. He saves us from eternal torment in hell. And he gives us eternal life in heaven. But not only that. He has also given us his name. **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.** God calls us what one might expect to call Christ. So fully has Christ redeemed us. He has completely given us his righteousness. It is not simply some cover-up. It is not calling something that it is not. Not only does God call us holy. He has made us holy. We have been given the name of Christ because it is through him that we are made righteous. So we, as his children, have been fully intertwined with Christ. Paul agrees in 2 Corinthians. **God made him who had no sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

But we won't fully realize this righteousness, this side of heaven Christ, this righteous branch has already come. He has already lived a perfect life for us. He has suffered, died, and rose. He has already made us righteous in God's sight. Although he calls us by his own name, we are still sinners. We still long for a better time. We won't fully understand what Christ has done for us until we experience the result first hand. We wait for Christ to return.

So this advent season as we look back at Christ's first coming, we can't help but look forward to his second coming. For his work is not complete until he comes again. He is not done until all the saints are brought to their heavenly home. And that is what we long for. That is the eternal life that we eagerly await.

Christmas is often looked at as a time to get away from the everyday life. A time to relax with friends and family. During this advent season don't get caught up in the extracurriculars. Don't focus on the things the world attaches to Christmas. Focus on what is truly important—the coming of the Righteous Branch of David. He comes to make us righteous. And he will come again to make us fully realize that he has done what is just. Amen.