The Righteous Branch

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The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **15** *In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.* **16** *In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."* **17** *For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel,* **18** *and the levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to make grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time.* (Jeremiah 33:14-18)

1. Many Names

Names are an important part of our lives. Our church sign says that my name is Y. Joe Kim. My Korean name is Yong Hwan. The name means "bright face." My father gave me this name hoping that I would be a well-known person or someone who has an impact on others.

When I became a U.S. citizen, I took the middle name Joseph. Christine did the same. Now, Christine and I have two names, our Korean names and our American middle names.

2. Names for Jesus

Do you know how many different names and titles Jesus has in the Bible? If you think about it, I am sure you can think of a few well-known ones. Jesus is called the Son of God (Mat. 3:17), Son of man (Luke 19:10), Savior (Luke 2:11), Messiah (John 1:41), Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), Lord of lords and king of kings (Rev. 17:14), the Word (John 1:1), Lamb of God (John 1:29), the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), Light of the world (John 8:12), Bread of life (John 6:35), the Door (John 10:9), Good Shepherd (John 10:11), Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25), True Vine (John 15:1), Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13), Almighty one (Rev. 1:8), Advocate (1 John 2:1), Bridegroom (Mat. 9:15), Chief Cornerstone (Ps. 118:22), Deliverer (1 Thess. 1:10), Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14), Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22), Indescribable Gift (2 Cor. 9:15), Judge (Acts 10:42), Mediator (1 Tim 2:5), Peace (Eph. 2:14), Rock (1 Cor. 10:4), Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Today, there is one more I'd like to highlight, the "Righteous Branch" (Jeremiah 33:15). Let's look at the passage to understand the context of the passage as we look into the meaning.

3. The Context of Jeremiah

In 597-582 B.C. Jerusalem, the chief city of Judah, was invaded by the Babylonians three times. After a long siege, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

During the invasion, the Babylonians broke the city walls, killed many people, leveled the king's palace, and destroyed the holy temple. The people of Judah asked God why their country had been destroyed by a foreign invader. Did God break the covenant made at Mount Sinai? Was God powerless to stop the Babylonians?

This is the context where we find Jeremiah, the prophet. Jeremiah is one of four major prophets in the Old Testament. He is the principal character and his life is a symbol of the nation's demise and restoration.

Jeremiah is arrested, imprisoned, and left in a cistern to die. He loses everything, but somehow survives. Jeremiah later buys a plot of land to symbolize the renewed life that will come in the future.

Many of the people don't listen to Jeremiah, but he continues to proclaim the new covenant God intends to make with his people when Christ comes to earth. The people eventually gain hope from Jeremiah. Despite the Israelites' sinfulness and the state of their country, Jeremiah affirms that God will bring them into a future of promise.

4. The Righteous Branch

In Jeremiah 33:15, the author says, "***In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land***."

Who is "a righteous Branch"? This term is found in Jeremiah 23:5. "***The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land***."

"A righteous Branch" refers to a Messianic figure. He would come from the lineage of David to reign over Israel. The Messiah would be unlike any previous descendant of David. He would be an ideal king. He would do what is just and right. The term "Just and right" can be translated to mean "the whole will of God."

The "righteous branch" in Jeremiah 33 would be a divine leader born into the world. The leader would fill the role of the king and the priest. Who is this person? This person is Jesus Christ.

The prophecy was that the Messiah would be born. Many at the time could not believe the prophecy. There was no king in occupied Judah and Israel. There was no more temple in Jerusalem. The country was destroyed. How could Jeremiah preach of such a promise?

It is important to remember that at the time when Jeremiah proclaims this prophecy, he is being held in the court of the guard in the royal palace of Judah and the Babylonians were besieging the city (32:2). Jeremiah says that Jerusalem will be destroyed, but in the end times, the Messiah would rule as their high priest. The Messiah would be in constance fellowship with God and would mediate for his people. Jeremiah prophesies that there is hope even when it seems that all hope is lost.

5. Hope in Crisis

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The theme of this Sunday is hope. The 400 years prior to the birth of Jesus is called the Intertestamental Period. It is known as the "400 Silent Years" because it was a period where God revealed nothing new to his people. Israel remained under the rule of other countries during this period. For many, this would be a time without hope. Many waited patiently for the coming of the Messiah.

The message of Jeremiah gives hope. Although all hope seems lost, Jeremiah reminds the people that God would fulfill his promise and one day send the Messiah.I believe we all can relate to this feeling in our personal lives. In my experience as a pastor, I have learned that there isn't a single person who doesn't have a problem, a worry, or a prayer concern at any point of life.

Where do we find hope?

6. Conclusion

Matthew 1:1 says, "***An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham***." Matthew clarifies that Jesus is a descendant of David. During the season of Advent, we celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise in the birth of Jesus. We also remember that we are waiting for the return of Christ. Our hope is in Christ who will come again. The Jewish people have waited for the coming of the Messiah for about 600 years. In this season, we need to be patient in our waiting.

The Bible tells us that God is faithful to his promises and his covenant. Because of his faithfulness, we can rejoice and praise the Lord even when in times of trial. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "***Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you***." In this world there are so many people who look for hope. Maybe the best source of hope is the sharing of God's story in our lives. Our hope is in our God and in Christ who will come again.

This morning, I'm glad we get to celebrate one adult baptism and 8 people joining our church. It is God's grace. Over the past year, we have celebrated 3 infant baptisms 12 adults joining. 18 new families, 29 adults, and 8 children and youth regularly attend our worship service.

There is a person who has been praying for new people to come and experience God's love through our church. I noticed that many Sundays we had visitors because of her prayers. We also were able to have a confirmation class and host the Watoto African Children's Choir with us.

When we started in 2018, no one could have imagined that all these blessings would have happened throughout the year. But we are reminded in this season that God is the one who gives us hope in even the most difficult situations and that God is the one who continues to give us hope and helps us to share the Good News of Jesus and serve our community.

7. Application

It is easy to try to get ahead of God's plans and timing in life. But As a body of Christ and as followers of Jesus, let God set the direction for our lives and for our community. But as we go into the Advent season, we are reminded that Jesus is the head of the church. He knows every issue and every situation in our lives and the church. And He has the best plan and timing to bring about everything that needs to happen.

When my younger sister and I moved from our small town to the capital city in Korea many years ago, we sang the hymn in front of our old church. I would like to sing hymn no. 130 again, "God Will Take Care of You."

Would you join me in singing the first stanza of the hymn?

"Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you.
God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you, God will take care of you."

The words of this hymn are the hope that we have in faith. Until today God has been taking care of me and my family. No matter the situation that may be around us, we are reminded that it is God that takes care of not only us, but the entire world every moment of every day.

We share the stories of our church and of our lives with others as a way to give hope to others that God is faithful to caring for his people. I am sure many of us can think of the many stories that we might have of how God has done great things in and around us and how God is able to give us hope in all situations.

Jesus is "the Righteous Branch." When we put our lives and our trust in him, Jesus becomes our "righteous branch." And in turn, we become little branches of Jesus to this world. In order to be happy, we tend to think that we need money, health, spouse, children, friends, and so on. But what a baby needs is not all of these. If a baby is with his or her mom, he or she has everything. If we believe that God will take care of us, there is nothing to worry about. St. Paul says, "***Be joyful in hope, be patient in suffering, be faithful in prayer*** (Romans 12:12). Amen.