

“The Advent of our King”

Jeremiah 33:14-17

I'm teaching 5th and 6th grade religion over at St. James this Trimester, so that will be until the end of February. Our current unit is on the fall of Israel and Judah and the Babylonian Captivity. I know what you are thinking, “Pastor, what does this have to do with Advent?” It has a lot to do with Advent.

Advent is a time of waiting and watching for the King to come. In 586 BC, Jerusalem is destroyed and there is no longer a king to sit on the throne. Zedekiah was the last one. But God promised through the prophet Jeremiah that “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.” In other words, there will always be a king from the house and line of David. This promise was made while the city of Jerusalem is being destroyed. People are literally tearing down their own homes to provide material to fill in the breach in the city wall. And it is in this context that Jeremiah brings words of peace from God.

This is a reiteration of the covenant God made with David. The Lord says to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-13, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall

come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

After Jerusalem is destroyed by Babylon, even though it gets rebuilt 70 years or so later, for about 600 years, it seemed as if there was no king of the house and line of David to sit on the throne. The people of God were meant to watch and wait in hopeful anticipation for God to fulfill His promises. God promised through the prophet Jeremiah that those taken away into exile in Babylon will be well taken care of, and their offspring will one day return, and they will one day have a king from the house and line of David once again.

When the Wise Men from the East come to King Herod to congratulate him on account of the birth of the new king, Herod, of course, did not take the news well, but the scribes knew where to find the new king. He would be born in Bethlehem, the City of David, for he was to be of the house and line of David.

There was a season of Advent which lasted about 600 years. It was a time of anticipation – waiting and watching for the king to come. The King has come, and we are nearing the end of the year of our Lord, 2018. Our King has ascended into heaven, but “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.” There does not need to be a palace in Jerusalem for Christ to be King. He reigns right now, and we long for the return of the King.

Advent is a time of watchful anticipation, but as you can probably tell from the appointed Gospel reading from Luke, the watching and waiting done in Advent isn't merely a countdown of shopping days until Christmas. We are certainly looking forward to the celebration of the birth of our Lord, as we do each year, however, we are living in a greater Advent time.

Like that 600 year period from the time of the last of the Davidic kings until the coming of Christ at Bethlehem, the time of waiting and watching for the King to return seems like it's taking longer than it should. The signs of the end of the age are all around us and have been all around us for generations. There is a King from the house and line of David who still reigns and He will reign forever.

This promise to David has held a special place in my heart and mind for many years. In my first year at the Seminary, at my field work church in Gar Creek, IN the pastor had myself and two other Seminary students give "in character" presentations for each of the three Advent midweek services. I was not yet certified to preach, but my pastor said what I would be doing was not really a sermon.

I was David. So, yes, I had a robe (not like this one), and I can't remember if I had a fake beard or not (it was 1991) – I know I didn't have a real one. I was supposed to go out and speak to the people and tell them a little about me (David) and tie it in with Advent and the coming of the Christ – the King who would be of the house and line of David. That sounded a lot like a sermon, which we were told we couldn't do until we had

Homiletics class. The other two seminarians were more experienced students who already were “certified.”

So I did what my pastor wanted without breaking the Seminary rules. I tied together several portions of Scripture using David’s words of prayer, and then David quoting what God said elsewhere. And I made it a lengthy prayer, basically a soliloquy walking around the chancel with my hands up, looking up to the heavens – as that is the way in which the ancients prayed.

So I began, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?” For you have said, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever.” That is from Second Chronicles.

Thankfully David has a lot of text to work with. Putting this together and memorizing it was one of my most vivid memories from Seminary (and I didn’t even get a grade for it). Unfortunately, the computer on which I wrote that soliloquy crashed, so there will be no reprise of that event. Besides, this is the only robe I want to wear.

But this promise concerning the permanent establishment of a man, the incarnate Son of God, sitting on the throne of David was meant to be a comfort to the faithful in Jerusalem at a time of terrible destruction. These words are meant to be a comfort to the faithful today, as a sure promise that amid all the chaos of our day, our King still sits on His throne. He still reigns. And one day, He will return. Until then, we wait in the hopeful anticipation of the Advent of our King. Amen.