

NORTH MAIN SERMON DECEMBER 1, 2024

JEREMIAH 33: 14-16

<sup>14</sup> “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and 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<sup>[a]</sup> will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.’

GOSPEL READING LUKE 21: 25-36 "

<sup>1</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. <sup>22</sup> For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. <sup>23</sup> How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. <sup>24</sup> They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. <sup>25</sup> “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. <sup>26</sup> People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”<sup>29</sup> He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>34</sup> “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be

able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Watch and Wait"

Have you ever been so distracted that you started forgetting simple things? Is it because we are not “paying attention” or are we just overwhelmed with the every day things. Perhaps the answer to that doesn’t matter. What does matter is that when we are distracted from what’s important, we tend to focus on what is not important. It has been suggested that we lose the wonder of it all, because along the way everything becomes "merely." Things are "merely" stars, sunset, rain, flowers, and mountains. Their connection with God's creation is lost. During this Advent season many things are just "merely." It becomes "merely" Bethlehem, merely a stable, merely a birth -- we have no feeling of wonder or mystery left because we are so distracted by the everyday things that nothing seems to be magical any more. Within the Advent narrative As nothing is "merely." Things are not "merely" things, but are part of God's grand design. Common things, such as motherhood, a birth, a child, now have new meaning. This is not "merely" the world, but a world that is charged with the beauty and grandeur of God's design. It is a world so loved by God that God gave his only Son. As our Offertory said today, so that whoever believes shall not perish but have everlasting life. Advent starts this day, we need to be in full **Preparation for Christ's Coming**. What is so great about the Advent season is that everything appears charged with the beauty and grandeur of God. Nothing is merely. Our Gospel says he will come in a great cloud with power and glory. Our life will be a life of fullness and joy, But our life will be also a preparation for even more fullness.

In our first reading today it seems that the people were watching and waiting for the promise that God made that the “day is coming” The world will be saved by someone who will do what is just and right for the world. But even good things bring about changes or adjustments. Even

things we long for sometimes don't fit into the life we've made. Because we've been living without, making room is not always easy. This is why the First Sunday of Advent readings always sound so scary. Think of what they said to the world before God sent his Son. We are being reminded that the world as we know it isn't the last word. And while our hearts long for wholeness, especially for the broken in this life; while our hearts long for peace, especially for those who have only known war; while our hearts long for fullness and healing, especially for those who are hungry and hurting, if those were to come, they would unsettle us for a time. Here is how Jesus spoke of those days that are coming in our Gospel reading for this week:

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. I'm not sure how we should receive this sort of thing on the First Sunday of Advent. Maybe A second look at those verses implies something different. Maybe it isn't fear that Jesus is trying to instill. Maybe it is something altogether different. Maybe it is the opposite. And what is the opposite of fear? Hope. Jesus tells us to raise our heads, to look up, to trust, to have confidence, to pay attention. Watch and Wait .. Hope coming. Advent is a multilayered time. There is the remembrance and the desire to recapture the birth of that baby again. We really want to hear that angel song and believe that, if even for a moment, peace on Earth is within the realm of possibility. "Be on guard so that your hearts aren't weighed down..." So that you don't miss it; so that you don't miss Jesus. That's the amazing thing about this season: there are glimpses of the kingdom that appear when you least expect it. There are sightings of the Savior in the twinkling of the eyes of a small child, in the hesitant thank-yous that you get when you see new people. and the gasps of wonder when you see super exciting things. . In the late-night conversations of family members trying to figure out what might be next, there are prayers of hope and love, an embrace of peace that brings Hpe to our eyes . . . if we pay attention.

Jeremiah says it simply, "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”. In those days, the prophet writes, God will “execute justice and righteousness in the land” That would be a wonderful surprise. Justice and righteousness. Almost incomprehensible, almost too much to believe, to hold on to, to prepare for. Almost. But That’s what Advent asks of us—to believe in what seems unbelievable; to hold on to what seems beyond our grasp; and to live, to prepare to live as though it was the way we were going to encounter every day.

This is why the prophets are a guiding image for this week. They lived preparation. They saw what was, and they heard what could be, what should be, and they lived in that tension. They were Advent people before we were. We live a similar existence today. We live as a witness to what could be, what is coming. . That’s our hope; that’s why we watch and wait in our preparation. The days are surely coming. Like unexpected hope. Like justice and righteousness. And it will be to you a joy when it comes.