

Advent 1



Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

"The Collect voices the longing appeal of the church in the single word "Come," which is addressed directly to Christ. This form of address, while unusual in Collects, is particularly appropriate as we begin another 'year of our Lord.'" [1]

Jeremiah 33:14-16

{14} 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."

14...15...16. The days...In those days...In those days: The days are not ordinary days in the future, but days which will be filled with the mighty acts of Yahweh, days when Yahweh will keep his promise. While the sense of prophecy fulfilled has, for us, an eschatological flavor, Israel expected them to come as "real" days in the future.

14. I will fulfill the promise I made: Cf. 29:10, "my promise...bring you back to this place...." The promise is to bring Judah back from exile to the land of Israel.

the house of Israel and the house of Judah: In verse 16 Judah and Jerusalem are mentioned, but of the house of Israel. "The parallelism...of 'Judah' and 'Israel' suggests that Jrm's old dream of reunion of north and south (3:18) is still alive, but the reading both of G^{aleph} [*Sinaiticus* manuscript of the Septuagint] and 33:16 ('Jerusalem' rather than 'Israel') suggests that it was easier for a later generation to envisage a restoration of the south alone." [2]

15. a righteous Branch: "The term 'Shoot' [Branch] (semah)...later became a technical term for [the ideal Messianic] expected king (Zech iii 18, iv 12); the figure, though not the word is found in Isa xi 1." [3] It is used in a more general, non-technical way in Isaiah 4:2: "On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious...." *Hoter*, "shoot," and *netser*, "sprout" are alternative terms. [4] Zechariah applied the term to Zerubbabel (Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). The Targum to Isaiah 4:2 applied it to the Messiah. At Qumran it was used to designate the kingly Messiah (4Qflor 1:1; 4Q Bless 1:3-4). It is used in one of the petitions of the Shemoneh (the Eighteen Benedictions, a Jewish prayer).

16. this is the name by which [Judah and Jerusalem] will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness": In 23:5-6 this name is applied to a future descendant of David who will rule as king, deal righteously, and execute justice and righteousness in the land. There were those who hoped that Zedekiah, whose name (tsidqiYAHU) is a play on this phrase, (*YHWH tsidqenu*), was to be the king who would restore Judah's fortunes.[5] Jeremiah's attitude toward him was quite different: "I will make them a horror, an evil thing, to all the kingdoms of the earth--a disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them" (24:9). Here Jeremiah applies the name to Judah and Jerusalem rather than to a Davidic king.

Comment: Jeremiah 30-33 is frequently called "the Book of Consolation" because of the

hopeful nature of the sayings of Jeremiah in it. Chapters 30-31 are written in poetry and probably reflect the transmission of the oral style of Jeremiah's prophecy, while chapters 32 and 33 are written in prose, and, in some cases at least, look like a commentary or expansion of the poetic oracle. In this case, the poetic oracle is in 23:5-6; the prose commentary in 33:15-16. The point that is made by Jeremiah's prophecy, within the historical context, is put succinctly in Psalm 146:3, "do not put your trust in princes."

Psalm 25:1-9

{1} To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. {2} O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. {3} Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. {4} Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. {5} Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. {6} Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. {7} Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! {8} Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. {9} He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. {10} All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Comment: Psalm 25 is an acrostic Psalm. The Psalmist prays for God's protection, that God will show him/her God's will and paths, and further that God will not remember the singer's sins and transgressions, but will act with love and compassion.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

{9} How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? {10} Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. {11} Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. {12} And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. {13} And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

11. our God and Father...and our Lord Jesus Christ: "...the close collocation of God and Jesus in the prayer indicates that for Paul they are thought of as working together in unity, and this has undoubted implications for the supreme position which Paul ascribes to the Son of God (1:10) alongside the Father.... Paul *assumes* the divinity of Jesus—to call him 'Son of God' in the way in which Paul uses the phrase cannot mean anything else."^[3]

13. the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints: In the New Testament parousia Jesus meets the resurrected believers *after* he returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16f; Col 3:4). Paul's description here is more in keeping with Zechariah 14:5; "Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him"

Comment: Paul had preached and debated in Thessalonica for three weeks before he was forced to leave (Acts 17:1-15). He went to Athens and sent Timothy back to continue to establish and encourage the new Christian community. Timothy returned and reported that the Thessalonians had remained faithful and remembered Paul with affection (3:6-8). These verses are Paul's response to the good news. He indicates his thankfulness for them and prays that he may be able to see them again and bring their faith to maturity. He prays that the Lord will increase their love for each others and for all, and may increase their holiness in anticipation of the parousia.^[7]

Luke 21:25-36

{25} "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. {26} People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens 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 take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." {29} Then he

told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; {30} as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. {31} So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. {32} Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. {33} Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. {34} "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, {35} like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. {36} Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

25-26. *There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on earth*: It is clear from Luke 21:7-11 that the signs were originally connected with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. It is only later that they are also applied to the end of the creation.

the powers of heaven will be shaken: "Implied is the reversal of the created order and the return to chaos." [8]

27. *they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud'*: An allusion to Daniel 7:13. "...the saying refers to the glorious appearance of the risen Christ as the Son of Man coming in judgment...to deliver his own." [9]

28. *stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*: The signs of the end time are signs of hope and fulfillment for the believer. Others may "faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world," but Christians are to face the coming of the Son of Man with joy.

31. *the kingdom of God is near*: Not necessarily temporally immanent. Near in the sense that the signs, "signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on earth," the shaking of the powers of the heavens, and so on, reflect a rift in the separation between the earthly and the heavenly, so that the presence of the heavenly is "felt" to be near.

32. *this generation*: The phrase is a translation of the Rabbinic *haddor hazeh*. In the Gospels this phrase is used to identify the disobedient, unfaithful, who reject Jesus and his gospel. The meaning is that "*this kind* of generation with whom [Jesus] had to deal would not pass out of existence until everything took place." [10]

34-36: Jesus exhorts his followers to be alert and on guard so that they will be prepared and will escape "all these things" and be ready "to stand before the Son of Man." The emphasis is not so much on discerning the signs, but on not being engaged in the world. One should watch at all times and not be taken by surprise.

Comment: This Gospel has a superficial connection with the Gospel for Proper 28 – B. But there is a development from Mark where the signs are associated with the destruction of Jerusalem (and the Temple), as in Luke 21:5-24, to this passage which points to the coming of the Son of Man and the redemption of the faithful. The disciples should not be afraid of the end; they should raise their heads and stand tall, for their redemption is drawing near. They should look forward with confidence to the return of the Son of Man before whom they will stand.

Reflection

The Advent season opens on the note with which Pentecost closed. The focus is on the Parousia, not the Nativity. For us the Nativity is in the past, it is for the Parousia we wait. The days are coming when the waiting will be over, when the signs and the promises are fulfilled. The time of the end will be filled with fear and foreboding, but believers are admonished to "stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." In the meantime the proper attitude for the believer is to be on guard, alert and at prayer. The righteous Branch has come the first time, now he will come again, his name will be "The Lord is our righteousness," and he will come with great power to judge and redeem the

world and all who are in it. We pray that he will save us from our sins.

Hymns [11]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

443 --E--Rise, My Soul,
27 --D--Lo! He Comes
22 --D--The Advent of
34 --I--Oh, Come, Oh,

724s --P--My Soul in
627v --G--My Lord, What
321, 24, 33, 355, 504

Prayers of the People [12]

P or A: We await with renewed anticipation the promised coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We lift up our prayers to the Lord with the words "God of hope and promise," and respond, **"Hear our prayer."**

A: For the whole church, that it may gratefully receive the fulfilled promise of a Savior through the line of David. May the whole church rejoice in God's faithfulness and be inspired to carry the gospel to all nations. God of hope and promise, **Hear...**

A: For the nations, that an end to war, oppression, and strife may be realized in embracing the Gospel of the coming Prince of Peace. God of hope and promise, **Hear...**

A: For all those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit, that you bestow upon them your healing power and lead us, your people, to support them in their time of need. We pray for the sick and the dying in our midst, especially _____, and those whom we name in our hearts. God of hope and promise, **Hear...**

A: For our congregation, that we may be instructed in ways of righteous living, and learned in humility. That we may live lives of service toward you and toward one another, God of hope and promise, **Hear...**

A: For a renewed sense of mission and life in the coming church year, that we may always work to your glory. God of hope and promise, **Hear...**

P: Trusting in your mercy, we commend our prayers, spoken and unspoken, to you through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Or [13]

Presider or deacon

As we prepare to meet the Lord Jesus, let us offer prayers to God who comes as Emmanuel to fill our every need.

Deacon or other leader

For the peace of the world, and for our unity in Christ.

For *N* our bishop and all bishops, for the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

For the church throughout the world and the faithful in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority.

For justice, peace, and freedom among peoples of the earth.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, and for those in prison.

For the dying and the dead.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Joining our voices with the blessed Virgin Mary and with all the saints and angels of God,

let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

O Emmanuel, our king and lawgiver, desire of all nations and Savior of all peoples, come and save us, O Lord our God. Glory to you for ever.

Notes

[1] Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947, p. 466.

[2] William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-15*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, p. 619.

[3] John Bright, *Jeremiah*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965, p. 205.

[4] Holladay, *Ibid.*, p. 618.

[5] The incorporation of the name of God, *YHWH*, or the word God, *El*, in the name of a person, king or commoner is frequent in Hebrew. Also, the placement of that name at the beginning or end of the name is also common; e.g. Nathaniel and Jonathan are essentially the same name. In the first case, the theophoric is the generic word for God, *el*, and is placed at the end; in the second, it is *YO* for *YHWH*, and is placed at the beginning. On the use of names to mark a change of character see the names in Hosea 1:6-2:1.

[6] I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, p. 100.

[7] "Parousia" is "a technical term to speak of the arrival or presence of Christ in glory at a particular point in the eschatological process." Christopher Rowland, "Parousia," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. by David Noel Freedman). Doubleday, 1992, Vol. 5, p. 166.

[8] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1985, p. 1350.

[9] *Loc. cit.*

[10] Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel* (Completely revised and expanded). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p. 338.

[11] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc9798.txt>

[12] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

[13] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>