

“ ‘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.

“ ‘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.

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 GIVES US WONDERFUL PROMISES

- I. God’s Promises Are Certain
- II. God’s Promises Are Beneficial

Dear children of God,

Promises mean everything to a child. The costume needed for this year’s Christmas play is not only going to be ready but it will be the best because Mom promised to sew it. Fish is already on the menu for dinner next Saturday because Dad promised a fishing expedition and that you wouldn’t come back empty handed. Promises mean everything to children and they trust that the promises given them will be fulfilled.

But this isn’t true only for young children. This is true for children of all ages. We live on promises our entire life. A great deal of our happiness in life depends on whether the promises given to us are kept. When promises are broken, the result is often heartache and lost trust.

In our sermon text this morning, we remember the wonderful promises God gives to his dear children. God, unlike parents... or children... or siblings... or friends... or your spouse... unlike us, God never breaks his promises. God does not lie. God cannot lie. God will not disappoint. As believers, we live our entire lives in the comfort and confidence we receive in the wonderful promises God gives us in his Word.

I. God’s Promises Are Certain

This has been true for all believers. For generations the children of Israel had clung to the promises God made to their fathers, the promises made to their father Abraham. God promised that He would make Abraham into a great nation, that his children would be as numerous as the stars. God promised that the land to which he had called Abraham would be his own. God promised that all peoples on earth would be blessed through his line.

But then the unthinkable happened... in 586 B.C. the Babylonians invaded Judah. And as they moved in, it appeared as if God had moved out and had forgotten his promises in the process.

When Babylon invaded many of the inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom were taken into exile, Jerusalem was captured, the temple destroyed... and the faithful remnant was left wondering whether their nation would survive? Would the temple someday be restored? Would God fulfill the promises he made to their fathers?

Imagine the grief, the despair and hopelessness of those living in Judah. The physical suffering inflicted upon them by the foreign invaders was bad enough. But it was nothing compared to the spiritual suffering they experienced due to the doubts they now had concerning everything they had previously believed. When doubts creep in, faith suffers. When doubts take over, faith dies.

I imagine that our enemy the devil, the father of lies, has found very few weapons that are more effective at destroying faith than that of doubt. Isn't doubt one of the first reactions we have when tragedy strikes? We question God's presence and doubt his promises...

In our text this morning, the prophet Jeremiah was perhaps experiencing some doubts of his own. At this time, Jeremiah is under house arrest in the royal palace because King Zedekiah, the wicked king of Judah, did not approve of the prophecies of doom and destruction Jeremiah was proclaiming. King Zedekiah did not like to hear that soon unemployment would be going up... the value of property would be going down... the campaign he was running was doomed to fail... his kingdom would be taken from him, and he would be among those shackled and exiled. Really, what King Zedekiah did not want to hear was that he had disobeyed God and that he had been unfaithful.

Yet God did not leave his prophet or his people without hope. God reassured Jeremiah with the message that even though there soon would be no outward indication that the promises the people trusted would be fulfilled... the LORD their God would bring the exiles back and the temple would be rebuilt. Even though Israel would never again be the nation it once was; Israel would remain the nation through which the promised Messiah would come.

God himself said, ***"Behold, the days are coming... when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house to Israel and the house of Judah."***

"The days are coming" is a phrase that appears over 12 times in Jeremiah. This phrase is not a vague reference to some unknown time in the future. This is God's way of saying that something WILL happen. The date has been set. The outcome is certain. God uses this phrase not only in regards to His promises but concerning his warnings of judgment as well.

God's entire Word, including both His promises to believers and warnings to the unfaithful, is to be taken seriously. When God says "I have done this for you" or "I will do this for you" he means it. When God says "do not" or "do" he means this as well.

The parents who tell their child, "Do not play in the road" are serious because they know that the road is dangerous. If their child disobeys them the result may lead to serious injury or even death. Many today only picture God as a God of love who would never punish his children or give them any burdensome commands... and they certainly don't believe that a loving God would ever send anyone to hell.

But God is holy and just and for God to be God He cannot tolerate sin. Yet God does not take delight in the death of the wicked. ***"As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)*** Sin is what separates man from God. And the soul who sins will die. Doubting God is sin and the danger of doubt is that it leads to unbelief... the sin that separates us from God forever. God knows that the devil is constantly trying to tempt us to doubt his promises and his warnings. The devil wants nothing more than for us to come out and play in the dangerous road.

When Adam and Eve listened to Satan's call and disobeyed the one command God had given them, God did not leave them to suffer the punishment they deserved. Though in sin they turned away from God, He came to them in mercy and love. Instead of the eternal death they deserved He gave them the promise of eternal life through their Savior.

Yet there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood. And it was the blood of the Promised Messiah that would make the payment they could not. This promise of the Messiah given to Adam and Eve was handed down to their children and eventually to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to Moses; to David; to Solomon; and to the prophets.

II. God's Promises are Beneficial

And this promise could be trusted because it was given by God. God himself said, **“In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is right and just in the land”**.

As God had promised, after seventy years the physical nation of Israel was restored. But there was more to the Lord’s promise of restoration. True restoration would come through a new David, who unlike the kings of Judah would rule forever. Unlike the unfaithful and wicked kings of Judah, his rule would be just and right in the land.

The Hebrews held up David as their nation’s greatest king. David unified the country. He established the capital in Jerusalem. He was a fearless warrior and a respected leader. But as great as he was, there was nothing he could do to prevent his kingdom’s decline. As great as he was, he could not save his subjects from their sin.

Where David failed Jesus did not. Jesus did what was right. Unlike King David, he never did anything wrong. Jesus was just. He didn’t favor the rich and powerful. He had compassion on the poor and needy. He loved the unlovable and gave hope to the hopeless. Even though the only crown ever placed on his head was made of thorns, Jesus was the greatest king this world has ever seen.

This King the world will see again. Today is the first Sunday in Advent, the first Sunday in a new church year. Advent is a special time for us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus. We count down the days to Christ’s coming, when we will see him in all his glory, when we will see him descending from the clouds of heaven. We look forward to that day when the righteous Branch takes his rightful place as the judge of all because that will be the time when God’s people will be given a new 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”.

Jesus not only did everything right. He has made everything right between a holy God and unholy people. He came the first time to save the world. He will come a second time to judge the world. He came once to take away our sins. He will come again to take us to heaven.

Because Jesus was perfectly righteous for us, we are perfectly righteous before God.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus’ perfection is our perfection. Jesus’ righteousness is our righteousness. Jesus’ name is our name because we belong to him.

This text contains some wonderful promises, and like children we trust the wonderful promises of God. God keeps all the promises he makes. What promises has God given you? Peace with God... fellowship with one another... forgiveness of sins... a new life... eternal life... the righteousness of his Son: the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of all nations. What could be more wonderful? What could be more beneficial than the gifts Christ has won for you on the cross? And friends nothing can be more certain than this - **“No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”** Amen.