

THE ADVENT OF THE PASSIONTIDE'S PREFACE

Happy New Year! Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church:

Behold, days will come, says YHWH, when I will raise up to David (a) Righteous Branch, (a) King, and He will reign wisely and do righteousness and justice in (the) land.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

In this, our 19th Advent season together, the biblical texts demand a question of you. Our years have been added onto the 15 centuries of Advent celebrations in which the Church annually remembered the comings of our Lord, Jesus the Christ. With roots beginning in Spain and Gaul, this short penitential season has continued to bring the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of God declared in the arrivals of the Christ to millions of believers. It is a season of light which declares the work of God that continues to drive back the darkness of sin, death and hell. It is a time to remember the Royal King Who came to "save now," to hosanna. We have a few weeks set aside to mourn the sins, our sins, your sins, that moved Him to inaugurate His rule from the throne of the cross. That should lead you to the answer to this question which the text of the day demands: Why has Advent traditionally begun (notwithstanding the modern calendar innovations out of the A.D. 1960s) with Palm Sunday readings?

Advent begins with the Hosanna's of the Passiontide's preface that all who hear this day's Scriptures might again recall that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity came — *advented* — to die to bring forgiveness of sins. In His death, He destroyed death's hold on the children of Adam. In His death, He set out to bind the devil to this fallen world for a time, times, and half a time (cf. Dan 7, 12; Rev. 12). Jesus, that Second Person, died to bring life to you who will continue to hear and believe the Word of Truth proclaimed from the Holy Scriptures. This Advent Word, following the Introit Psalm which called upon God to show us His ways, annually declares:

¹ *Jeremiah 23:5*

Behold, days will come, says YHWH, when I will raise up to David (a) Righteous Branch, (a) King, and He will reign wisely and do righteousness and justice in (the) land.²

It is time, again, of watching, preparing, rejoicing and beholding that we be ready to proclaim the comings of the Christ as the One who “Saves Now!” This is the week to declare the advent of the Passiontide’s preface. It is time, again, to announce that days have come that were promised by God after fall of Israel in 722 B.C., and immediately prior to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is the season to declare Hope – the theme of the beginning Advent week which is remembered in the lighting of the first purple candle. The word brought hope to the ancient faithful who were about to lose their land, their homes, and the Temple of the Lord in their midst. That Word continued to proclaim hope throughout their years of exile and further struggles until it was fulfilled in the Advent of Jesus declared in today’s cries of Hosanna. Think about how powerful this promise would be to faithful believers who were about to lose everything on account of the majority of their brothers in the Church who were unrepentant and unfaithful to the One, True, God:

Behold, days will come, says YHWH, when I will raise up to David (a) Righteous Branch, (a) King, and He will reign wisely and do righteousness and justice in (the) land.³

We are living in a time wherein a vocal minority of those who trust in government cry out to it (as a living entity) in the hope that it would enact righteousness and justice in this land. An apparent majority of two generations have been reared apart from the Faith, and its guiding influences. They have been educated to find good in themselves – to be discovered in that which is beautiful, and pleasing to them as individuals. They have even been taught to disregard natural law, and to accept as normal any number of unnatural desires, emotions, and thoughts that are pleasing to any given individual.

² Jeremiah 23:5

³ Jeremiah 23:5

The generations who were born before A.D. 1962 enabled them in their self-godhood delusions. You declared that, at worst, they were good boys and girls who did bad things. I learned to say such. I was wrong. I repented. I have been forgiven. So too, I pray it has been for you who also taught falsely.

We are free to declare that there is only One who has been raised up to rule with pure wisdom. Only One has, and continues to have, a rule which actually does righteousness and pure justice. It is His Advents that we are given this time to remember. It is His comings that we anticipate in repentant hope.

His mortal Advent was drawing to its close as the crowd called out, hailing Him to be the fulfillment of God's promise through Jeremiah: "I will raise up to David (a) Righteous Branch..."

The people of the Faith who first heard those words were literally facing an earthly enemy whose armies were conquering the then known world. Following the reign of reformer King Hezekiah, they had been suffering through a century of evil kings raised up from David's family tree. They had endured the taunts and tributes required by figurehead Assyrian emperors to their North. As God spoke through Jeremiah, the great and powerful King Nebuchadnezzar was raised up.

God was using him to punish God's unrepentant people. The faithful few among them were suffering with alongside them. They also had generations living in their midst who had been reared apart from the proclamation of the Faith of the One, True God. Their kings were looking to government, their own and those of supposedly powerful allies, to save them from the destruction from the terror being wrought by those living in what is now Iraq and Syria. Those faithful to YHWH were living in the midst of those whose passions had turned them into self-delusions which led to personal happiness and satisfaction at great cost to their neighbors. Does that not sound familiar?

Perhaps you can find comfort in our days as history continues to repeat itself. You continue to hear the words of the ancient prophecy. You are called to remember that God continues to fulfill His Word in and for His Church. The New Testament Church has

been, for centuries, living in the times which began on the cross at Calvary, in which these words continue to be brought to completion:

*In His days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safe, and His Name by which He will be called is, "YHWH our Righteousness."*⁴

So far, in this first sermon of this new season of hope, peace, joy and love, you have heard words drawn from the root words translated: righteousness and justice. They are today tied to the biblical concepts of God's reign and His action, along with His people's salvation and safety. Scripturally speaking, as it is used in this day's opening verses from Jeremiah, the words formed from righteousness mean, "to be right," that means, "with God."

Therefore, the One raised up by God, the Descendant of David would be right, in Himself, with God. That means He would be pure, would hear and live God's Word in all He thinks, says, and does. The Scripture declares that this Son of David will be the One Who is ever right with God the Father. That excludes all the kings descended from David in the times of the united and divided monarchy. All of them, even good King Hezekiah, were sinners who needed repentance. Every one of them died on account of sin, even their sins, though a few fell asleep in the Faith as forgiven sinners.

Even so, and while the faithful were suffering under the God-displeasing decisions of evil king after evil king unto the end of their nations, God promised them a perfect King. Not only would that One be right with God in Himself, He would "do right" before God and man. In that He would enact justice in the midst of His people.

He would give the faithful not that which they deserved on account of their sinful natures, but that which He will to give them. He would work the justice that is foreign to humanity's fallen thinking. He would give them His righteousness. He would show them true beauty in suffering for others, for all sinners, for all time. The Word continues to declare how He does that, as it continues to proclaim *His Name by which He will be called is, "YHWH our Righteousness."*

⁴ Jeremiah 23:6

His very Name speaks of that which God wills to do to, for, in, and through those who believe in Him by grace through faith. He is not only right with God in Himself. He is right with God... for us, for you! He Who causes all good to be, Who restrains all evil is named, "our Righteousness!" Therefore, we united with all who hold to the confession that flowed forth from the Reformation which began five centuries ago declare from that:

We poor sinners are justified before God and saved solely by faith in Christ, so that Christ alone is our righteousness. He is truly God and man since in him the divine and human natures are personally united to one another...⁵

Yes, this day, a New Advent begins another Church Year with the proclamation that you are named with the Name of the God/Man. His Name, placed upon you, indicates to you that you are declared right with God now and forever! If that does not sink in today, the calendar will bring it into your ears again in about 19 Sundays, and again, about 19 Sundays after that. Three times a year you hear of the triumphal entry of Jesus to save now, that you might be named with His Name. In both halves of the Church Year – the Life of Christ Incarnate, (this Festival Season) and the Life of Christ in the Church (the Ordinary Time of the Church that ended yesterday) – and it serves as a bridge between those two emphases clearly declared in Holy Week and its Passiontide. With that we return to the prophecy of Jeremiah:

Therefore, behold, days come, says YHWH, when they will not say, "(as) the YHWH lives, which brought up the sons of Israel from land of Egypt..." but, "(As) YHWH lives, Who caused to bring up and Who caused to lead the seed of the house of Israel from (the) northland and from all the lands which I had caused to drive them;" (the) same shall return into all their land.⁶

The emphasis at the beginning of this New Year, in which we have also begun the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation of the Church is in hearing anew God's call to return to the LORD in His saving Word and Presence. You are being called away from the gods of personal happiness, of self-worth, of trusting in anything other than the One True God for your salvation. You are called **not** to a new Exodus from

⁵ Book of Concord, 472.1

⁶ Jeremiah 23:7-8

governments and generations hostile to the Faith. You are being called to the living God Who continues to lead His faithful people, the seed of the New Israel into the eternal Promised Land.

You have followed Him here. You have heard His Word. You have entered anew each day into the heavenly Promised Land on earth as you repeatedly return to your baptisms. You have hope in this ancient season of a New Year in the Church because you have received the Name of God in your person. He has been signed upon your forehead and upon your breast. In Him, you are free to declare, in winsome ways, that today's readings mean true hope, and beauty for those who bear the Name of the King, our righteousness. You may hear this proclamation as true for the Church of our age, even when evil presses in upon us:

Behold, days [have] come, says YHWH, when I [have] raise[d] up to David (a) Righteous Branch, (a) King, and He... reign[s] wisely and do[es] righteousness and justice in (the) land.⁷

In Christ, we have an eternal King. Through His Word He rules in us in wisdom. Through His touch, in the means He chose, He continues to declare us, you, right with the Father. In His means of grace, He works eternal justice for you, in you, and through you. May the hope that is in you all be seen by those who have been taught to find it only in themselves. As you remain in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are prepared for the Advent of Christ's Passiontide in this preface to a new year of our Lord.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Advent I (one-year series)

Introit Psalm 25:4; Psalm 25; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Gradual, Psalm 25:3a, 4; Romans 13:8-14; Verse, Psalm 85:7; Matthew 21:1-9

November 27, 2106

Pastor Michael H. Merhouse

Soli Deo Gloria

⁷ Jeremiah 23:5

Jeremiah 23:5-8

הַיָּמִים בָּאִים וְנֹאֲמֵי הַיְהוָה וְהַקְּמֵתִי לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק וְיִלְךָ מִלְּךָ וְהִשְׁפִּיל וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בְּאֶרֶץ
בְּיָמָיו תִּנְשָׁע יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֹּן לְבַטָּח וְיִהְיֶה יִקְרָא וְהִגְהָו צְדָקָתוֹ: 5
לְכֹן הַגְּהִי יָמִים בָּאִים וְנֹאֲמֵי הַיְהוָה וְלֹאֲיָמָרוּ עוֹד חִי־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:
כִּי אִם־חִי־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה נֹאֲשָׂר הַכִּיָּא אֶת־נֹרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צְפוֹנָה וּמִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִים שָׁם וְיִשְׁבּוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם: 6

⁵ Ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος, καὶ ἀναστήσω τῷ Δαυὶδ ἀνατολήν δικαίαν, καὶ βασιλεύσει βασιλεὺς καὶ συνήσει καὶ ποιήσει κρίμα καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ⁶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ σωθήσεται Ἰουδα, καὶ Ἰσραὴλ κατασκευάσει πεποιθώς, καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, ὃ καλέσει αὐτὸν κύριος Ἰωσεδεκ. (Verses 7&8 are placed at the end of the chapter in the LXX) . ⁷ Διὰ τοῦτο ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος, καὶ οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ἔτι Ζῆ κύριος ὃς ἀνήγαγεν τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου, ⁸ ἀλλὰ Ζῆ κύριος ὃς συνήγαγεν ἅπαν τὸ σπέρμα Ἰσραὴλ ἀπὸ γῆς βορρᾶ καὶ ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν χωρῶν, οὗ ἐξῴσεν αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖ, καὶ ἀπεκατέστησεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν αὐτῶν.⁹

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT:

Behold, days will come, says YHWH, when I will raise up to David (a) Righteous Branch, (a) King, and He will reign wisely and do righteousness and justice in (the) land.¹⁰

In His days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safe, and His Name by which He will be called is, "YHWH our Righteousness."¹¹

Therefore, behold, days come, says YHWH, when they will not say, "(as) the YHWH lives, which brought up the sons of Israel from land of Egypt..."¹²

But, "(as) YHWH lives, which caused to bring up and which caused to lead the seed of the house of Israel from (the) land towards midnight and from all the lands which I had caused to drive them;" (the) same shall return into all their land.¹³

NOTES

Jeremiah 23:6, Book of Concord, 472.1

It is the unanimous confession of our churches according to the Word of God and the content of the Augsburg Confession that we poor sinners are justified before God and saved solely by faith in Christ, so that Christ alone is our righteousness. He is truly God and man since in him the divine and human natures are personally united to one another (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21). Because of the foregoing a question has arisen, According to which nature is Christ our righteousness? Two false and mutually contradictory teachings have invaded some churches.

² One party has held that Christ is our righteousness only according to his Godhead. When he dwells in us by faith, over against this indwelling Godhead, the sins of all men are esteemed like a drop of water over against the immense ocean. Others, however, held that Christ is our righteousness before God only according to the human nature.

Jeremiah 23:6, Luther's Works, Vol. 35

Whoever reads this Bible should also know that I have been careful to write the name of God which the Jews call "Tetragrammaton"²⁷ in capital letters thus, LORD [HERR], and the other name which they

⁸Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia : With Westminster Hebrew Morphology. 1996, c1925; morphology c1991 (electronic ed.) . German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary: Stuttgart; Glenside PA

⁹Septuaginta : With morphology. 1996, c1979 . Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart

¹⁰ Jeremiah 23:5

¹¹ Jeremiah 23:6

¹² Jeremiah 23:7

¹³ Jeremiah 23:8

²⁷ Tetragrammaton, literally "four letters," is the technical term for the four-consonant Hebrew word for the name God, which is now commonly thought to be represented in English by the word "Yahweh." When the Hebrews came to this name in speaking or reading they avoided uttering it because of its sacred character, pronouncing instead the word Adonai (Lord) unless (as at Gen. 15:2) it immediately followed the word "Adonai" in the text, in which case "Elohim" (God) was read. In written Hebrew texts, the vowel-points of Adonai were given to the consonants of the Tetragrammaton with the resultant rendering in English, "Jehovah."

call *Adonai*²⁸ only half in capital letters thus, LORD [*HErr*].²⁹ For among all the names of God, these two alone are applied in the Scriptures to the real, true God; while the others are often ascribed to angels and saints. I have done this in order that readers can thereby draw the strong conclusion that Christ is true God. For Jeremiah 23[:6] calls him LORD, saying, “He will be called: ‘The LORD, our righteousness.’ ” The same thing is to be found in other passages. Herewith I commend all my readers to Christ and ask that they help me get from God the power to carry this work through to a profitable end. For I freely admit that I have undertaken too much, especially in trying to put the Old Testament into German.³⁰ The Hebrew language, sad to say, has gone down so far that even the Jews know little enough about it, and their glosses and interpretations (which I have tested³¹) are not to be relied upon. I think that if the Bible is to come up again, we Christians are the ones who must do the work, for we have the understanding of Christ without which even the knowledge of the language is nothing. Because they were without it, the translators of old, even Jerome,³² made mistakes in many passages. Though I cannot boast of having achieved perfection, nevertheless, I venture to say that this German Bible is clearer and more accurate at many points than the Latin. So it is true that if the printers do not, as usual, spoil it with their carelessness, the German language certainly has here a better Bible than the Latin language – and the readers will bear me out in this.¹⁴

28 *Adonai* literally means “my lord,” but by usage it was in effect a proper name.

29 While the Hebrew *YHWH* always had reference to God alone, *ADN* could mean either the divine Lord, or a lord or ruler who was not divine. Luther distinguished clearly between the two words by rendering *HERR* for *YHWH* and either *HErr* or *herr* for *ADN* (cf. LW 12, 99–101 and LW 13, 230). The distinction between the divine and human within *ADN*, however, was not consistently maintained in translation by the use of *HErr* and *herr* (cf. *WA*, DB 6, 538–539, note on Matt. 1:20). Cf. Luther’s *HERR-HERR* in Jer. 23:5–6 with the RSV LORD-LORD, Luther’s *HERR-herr* in Gen. 24:12 with the RSV LORD-master, and Luther’s *HERR-HErr* in Ps. 110:1 (1545 version only, the earlier versions being both *HERR-HERR* and *HERR-herr*, *WA*, DB 10¹, 476–477) with the RSV LORD-lord. In Luther’s Matt. 22:44 rendering of the first “Lord” of the Psalm quotation he went from *Gott* in 1522 through *Herr* and *HErr* to *HERR* in 1539 and later editions (*WA*, DB 6, 100, note). See Gen. 15:2, 8 where Luther translates *ADN YHWH* as *HErr HERR* (*WA*, DB 8, 73). Cf. also *WA*, DB 10¹, xxiii, n. 26.

30 Cf. Luther’s statement, “It was necessary for me to undertake the translation of the Bible, otherwise I would have died under the mistaken impression that I was a learned man.” *WA* 10¹, 60, ll. 13–15; cf. also *WA*, Br 2, 423, ll. 48–50.

31 Cf. Luther’s *Defense of the Translation of the Psalms*, in this volume, pp. 209–223.

32 Cf. p. 117, n. 1.

¹⁴Luther, M. 1999, c1960. *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia