**Jeremiah 33:14-16 14Listen, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the good promises that I have spoken to the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. 15In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to grow up from David’s line. He will establish justice and righteousness on earth. 16In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. This is what she will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.**

As you look back over your life, certain days stand out from the rest. Not all days are equal. It’s unlikely that you remember every day the same. Even if you are the type of person that tends to look at every day as the same in value, there are certain days that stick out for you. Some of you remember the day when the space shuttle Challenger or Columbia exploded. Most of you remember where you were on September 11, 2001. As an individual you may remember a birthday of special importance. A special trip. The day your favorite team won a championship. Or a day of particular sadness and loss. Some days are more important than others.

Jeremiah speaks to the people of Jerusalem about some important stand-out days. **Those days** sound like amazing days. Jeremiah says that those days are coming, not in the past. But for us today, those days have already come and gone. They happened when Jesus came. Just think about it, 2,000 years ago to this day, God was walking this earth in human flesh. Jesus came preaching good news, healing the sick and driving out demons, suffering and dying for our sins on the cross, and rising again, ascending to the Father in heaven. Those were the days. They are the most important days this world has yet seen. Jesus’ days on earth are **those days**.

Jeremiah says those days were the days. But the people of Jeremiah’s time, like people commonly do, were more interested in their own days. “These are my great days. These are the days that are important. I have bills to pay and health concerns and a difficult job. I have retirement to navigate, politics to follow, hobbies to pursue. I have chores to do. These are the days I care about. Not those days Jeremiah brings up.”

With all these concerns, do you know what happens? Countless Israelites turned aside to other sources of help. They neglected the words of God’s prophets. They abandoned the worship of God. Instead, they followed false prophets whose message was about the here and now. They turned to the gods of others, focused on what would lead to good crops for their current year, or on protecting themselves and their herds. Century after century this kept happening. The Israelites started with one seeming insignificant turn from God. Century after century, God sent prophets to warn them and to lead them to repent and to turn back to God. In the hope, that they would be ready for **those days** when the Messiah would be here on earth.

In Jeremiah’s generation, God’s patience ended with Jerusalem. No longer was the message: return to me and I will save your people. Now Jeremiah announced punishment for their unbelief and idolatry. God announced how he would crush them by letting the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem. He told Jeremiah he had made up his mind to demolish the city and nothing could change it.

That was the time, the days, when this lesson was spoken. Jeremiah announced to the people that a great destruction was coming, sent by God’s own hand. To the people of Jerusalem in this desperate situation, Jeremiah said: **Listen, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the good promises that I have spoken to the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous Branch to grow up from David’s line. He will establish justice and righteousness on earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.**

What kind of reaction do you suppose Jeremiah got to these words of promise? Most of the people despised him. They ignored him. Some told him to leave. Some claimed they didn’t need God’s promise of those days. They got use to God saying, “The days are coming.” Instead, they listened to those who spoke about peace for their current days. They said, “If you haven’t noticed, Jeremiah, there is a sea of Babylonian soldiers fully-armed. They’re planning to kill us or carry us away into slavery. All your God has to tell us that “the days are coming” when he will fulfill his promises? Jeremiah, we don’t care about **those days.** We have to get past these days.

It wasn’t long before Jerusalem fell to Babylonian rule as Jeremiah had foretold. That beautiful city of Jerusalem—the city of peace—the city of God was torn apart. Her walls broken down. The temple of God looted and destroyed. The prince of that city was taken before the Babylonian general who killed his sons right before his eyes and then gouged out his eyes so that it would be the last thing he saw. He and most of the people were led away in chains to a life far off to the east in Babylon.

Most of the people despised Jeremiah’s message from God. But those few among them who still placed their hopes in the promises of God’s Word were not to be disappointed. Even thought their current days were difficult, they clung to God’s sweet promises. In spite of their current days and partly because of them, they set their hearts not on their own day, but on **those days** which were coming.

“The days are coming,” God said. Come they did. 600 years later, God made a new branch sprout form the line of King David. His name was Jesus, God’s own Son. He came to Judah and a much-humbled Jerusalem to fulfill every promise God had made. He conquered death and sin and hell. He restored the relationship between God and his faithful people. He won eternal victory for God’s people over all their real enemies—eternal joy, an eternal kingdom.

“Those days”—Jesus’ days—are God’s source of true help and comfort for his people—also for us, living in 2021. The significance and power of Jesus’ earthly life extends far beyond the day when he ascended to the Father and was hidden by the clouds. The saving strength and merciful favor of God for you *today* is rooted and anchored in “those days”—in the life and work of Jesus Christ, come in the flesh for you, two thousand years ago.

That’s why the Church observes a church year, a liturgical year, year after year, rehearsing the life of Christ, over and over again. From Advent and Christmas and Epiphany, to Lent and Easter, and Ascension and Pentecost, our Scripture readings and hymns direct our attention to the saving life and work of Jesus Christ. The church year directs our attention to “those days,” which God tells us are the most important days for us. And so, as we begin another church year today on this First Sunday in Advent, we fix our eyes, we set our hearts, on “those days.”

*Those are the days* that truly matter most. As we hear from the Scriptures about Jesus’ life of love two thousand years ago, we encounter his revelation of God’s true heart, his profound love, and the true pattern and meaning of life. As we eat this bread which is his body and drink this cup which is his blood, we do so in remembrance of the days of Christ’s saving work; we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Because of Jesus’ death two thousand years ago, all of your sin and guilt is removed today. At the baptismal font, as our Lord gives us new life in Holy Baptism, he does so by the power of Christ’s resurrection. Because of his resurrection two thousand years ago, you have the pledge of eternal life and glory today.

Some days are more important than others, more outstanding, more special, more crucial. For those who know Jesus, *those* days, *his* days, are the most important and dear of all.

Throughout this sermon, we’ve been looking backward,to the days of Jesus. But there is another great day; Jesus calls it “*that* day.” *That* day is yet coming, our Lord Jesus has promised us, when the heavens above will be shaken and we will see Jesus coming on the clouds with power and great glory. Even as we fix our eyes on *those* days two thousand years ago, the days of our Lord Jesus, we also watch for *that day*, just as our Lord encourages us. In the flood of your everyday worries and concerns, dear friends, set your hearts on *that* day. And when you do see him coming on the clouds, “straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Lk 21:28)!

Because of his saving work for us at his first coming, when Jesus comes a second time, he will raise up all the dead, and he will give eternal life and a place in his eternal kingdom to all who trust in him. Thousands and thousands of his saints will rise from the dust on that day, and we will shine with them like the stars forever and ever. Jeremiah will be there, and those who trusted Jeremiah’s words. **In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.** On that day, all our troubles will be at an end. And God and his Messiah, King Jesus, will reign forever and ever. At last, they will establish justice and righteousness in the earth. Our Lord Jesus, our King, will establish justice and righteousness in us and among us. *That day* is coming soon, Jesus promises us. Stir up your power, O Lord, and come.

Some days are more important than others. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Define “those days.”
* Who will be called “the LORD our righteousness” (carefully consider this)?
* Identify three ways you will use the message of “those days” to help you this coming week.