

**Advent Vespers II**  
**The Second Sunday in Advent**  
7 December 2014  
*Concordia Lutheran Mission*  
Terrebonne, Oregon

## **“The Gospel Raises Up a Righteous Church through Christ’s Righteousness for Us.”**

### **Jeremiah 33:15-16**

In those days<sup>1</sup>, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, the LORD our righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

Last week we saw from Jeremiah that the Lord became man in order to be righteous for us in our place. This week we see that this Blessed Work of Christ produces a righteous offspring, namely, the New Testament Church. This new offspring or branch is a Righteous Church because she bears the Name of her Lord, “the LORD our righteousness”. For this reason the Apostle St. Paul says that Christ makes us “the righteousness of God”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“The days come,’ a common expression for the Messianic era, see Jer. 31:27-34, quoted in Heb. 8:8-12; 10:16-17.” The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, reprinted in *Concordia Classic Commentary Series*, 1988, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>In the 1905 Concordia Publishing House’s publication of Luther’s German Bible this chapter is captioned, “Redemption from the Babylonian Captivity. Christ and His Kingdom Promised.” *“Erlösung aus der Gefangenschaft Babels. Christus und sein Reich verheissen.” Die Bible oder die ganze Helige Schrift Alten und Neun Testaments, nach der deutschen Uebersetzung Dr. Martin Luthers* (“The Bible order the entire Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, according to the German Translation of Dr. Martin Luther), St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 765.

<sup>3</sup>**II Corinthians 5:21.**

This new offspring of the New Testament Church Christ creates through the Gospel, i.e., God's Word and Sacraments.<sup>4</sup> Through the Word and Sacraments, Christ places His Saving Righteousness upon us and makes it our own through faith. Because Christ creates His Church in His Righteousness through the Gospel, we gain life and salvation.

Christ raises up a righteous Church to God by His Righteousness for us given to us through the Gospel.

## **I. Christ Raises Up a Righteous Church through the Gospel, i.e., through His Word and Sacraments.**

### **A. Christ raises up a Righteous Branch, the Church, through the Gospel.**

Folks often do not think of the Gospel as the "righteousness of God". Folks tend to think of the Ten Commandments alone as the righteousness of God but not the Gospel. Folks tend to put the Gospel into the category of backsliding, being forgiven so one can go outside and sin more.

Of course, the Gospel is not sin but what Scripture says it is, the Righteousness of God. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

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<sup>4</sup>"That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith*, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake." *The Augsburg Confession, Article V: Of the Ministry*.1-3, *Triglotta*, p. 45, underscore added.

"*Of the Use of the Sacraments* they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them." *The Augsburg Confession, Article XIII: Of the Use of the Sacraments*.1, 2, *Triglotta*, p. 49, underscore added.

"Although *the Church* properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: *The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat*, etc. Matt. 23, 2. Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men." *The Augsburg Confession, Article VIII: What the Church Is*.1-2, *Triglotta*, p. 47.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference ...<sup>5</sup>

Notice that the Righteousness of the Gospel is not just a New Testament teaching but also an Old Testament teaching because it was witnessed by the “law and the prophets”. Likewise also the Apostle St. Peter teaches that the Gospel is also an Old Testament teaching:

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.<sup>6</sup>

Jeremiah also speaks of this Righteousness of God in today’s passage from **Jeremiah 33**:

In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, the LORD our righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

This Branch of Righteousness that God causes to grow is the Church.<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah writes:

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<sup>5</sup>**Romans 3:21-22.**

<sup>6</sup>**Acts 10:43.** The Lutheran Church confesses that the Gospel is the unanimous teaching of the Church, both Old Testament and new: “But Peter also here cites in our issue the consensus of the Church: *To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins*, etc. The consensus of the prophets is assuredly to be judged as the consensus of the Church universal. [I verily think that if all the holy prophets are unanimously agreed in a declaration (since God regards even a single prophet as an inestimable treasure), it would also be a decree, a declaration, and a unanimous strong conclusion of the universal, catholic, Christian, holy Church, and would be justly regarded as such.] We concede neither to the Pope nor to the Church the power to make decrees against the consensus of the prophets.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article XII.[V].66, 67, *Triglotta*, p. 271, **Acts 10:43**, underscore added.

<sup>7</sup>**Jeremiah 33:15-16.**

<sup>8</sup>“1. The Christian Church came into existence only after Messiah had come. 2. The raising up of the Branch was a unique fact, complete in the coming of Christ, hence the perfect is used in the Hebrew text; the Church is constantly sprouting to the end of time, hence the imperfect. 3. The Messiah is the Righteous Branch, personally righteous in divine perfection; the Church is ‘a sprout of righteousness,’ because her righteousness is an imputed righteousness, and even her personal righteousness is accounted perfect righteousness only because of Christ’s vicarious perfection.” The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch, The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch.

and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, the LORD our righteousness.<sup>9</sup>

The Church is the righteous branch that the Lord causes to grow because she bears the Righteousness of God. She bears the Righteousness of God because the Lord has Placed His Righteousness upon her. Just as a bride takes her surname from the bridegroom, so the Church takes her name from her Lord and Savior. The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch writes:

The Church being the bride, the wife of the heavenly Bridegroom, is called by His name, just as the wife is called by the name of her husband, having been received into a family and given a name which was not hers by birth. ... She shall be called, one shall give her the name Jehovah, because she is Christ's, Jehovah's, spouse, one with Him in mystical union<sup>10</sup> (cp. John 17:20-23).<sup>11</sup>

This Righteousness of the Church is the Righteousness Christ won for all men on the Cross that we might gain the Righteousness of God and salvation. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

for he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>12</sup>

Christ raises up a Righteous Church through His Righteousness which is the Gospel.

**B. God's Word and Sacraments, i.e., the Gospel, place Christ's Righteousness upon men and saves.**

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*Jeremiah*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, reprinted in *Concordia Classic Commentary Series*, 1988, p. 189.

<sup>9</sup>**Jeremiah 33:15-16.**

<sup>10</sup>*Jeremiah*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, reprinted in *Concordia Classic Commentary Series*, 1988, p. 271.

<sup>11</sup>**Unio Mystica** [the Mystical Union]. The marvelous indwelling of the Holy Spirit and of the entire Triune God in the hearts of the believers by faith, according to which the Spirit of adoption is sent into the hearts of the children of God, Gal. 4, 6; Rom. 8, 15, whereby they are sealed and have been given the earnest of their redemption, 2 Cor. 1, 22; Eph. 1, 13, 14, also wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of their Savior, Eph. 1, 17; according to which, however, they have received the still more mysterious blessing of having the Father and the Son come unto them and make their abode in the believers, John 14, 23." *Concordia Cyclopedia*, ed. Fuerbringer, Engelder, and Kretzmann, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927, p. 774, s. v. **"Union Mystica"**, translation from the Latin in brackets added.

<sup>12</sup>**II Corinthians 5:21.**

But where does the Lord place His Name upon us? He places His Name upon us in Holy Baptism. Jesus says:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ...<sup>13</sup>

The Apostle St. Peter states that Christ's Name is placed upon us in Holy Baptism:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>14</sup>

Plainly the Church becomes righteous through Holy Baptism because Holy Baptism Absolves of sin and brings about the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This Blessed Event should not surprise because in Holy Baptism we put on Christ and His Righteousness for us. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>15</sup>

This Righteousness of Christ's through the Gospel creates saving faith and saves. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.<sup>16</sup>

Christ Places His Righteous Name on men through the Gospel and, thereby, raises up a Branch of Righteousness, the Church.

## **II. The Church Blesses Men with the Righteousness of Christ through the Gospel, Saves, and Gives Life Eternal.**

### **A. The Righteous Branch, the Church, Christ's Bride, Reigns through the Gospel.**

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<sup>13</sup>**St. Matthew 28:19.**

<sup>14</sup>**Acts 2:38.**

<sup>15</sup>**Galatians 3:26-27.**

<sup>16</sup>**Romans 1:16-17.**

Through the Church sharing the Gospel, she blesses other men with the Saving Righteousness of Christ. The prophet Jeremiah writes:

In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.<sup>17</sup>

Through the Gospel the Church executes the Blessed Judgment of the Gospel, namely, the Absolution of all sins for Christ's sake. The Apostle St. John writes:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, He breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus says:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.<sup>19</sup>

Just as the husband turns over the keys of the house to his bride, so Christ turns the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to His Bride to the Church to share the blessings of the Gospel with others. The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch writes:

The Church is "Our Righteousness" because only through the Church do we obtain the righteousness of Christ by means of the Gospel the Church preaches. If Christ is Our Righteousness, then the Church, one with Christ, is Our Righteousness.<sup>20</sup>

The Lutheran Church confesses:

This power [of the keys] is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, according to their calling, either to many or to individuals. For thereby are granted, not bodily, but eternal things, eternal life. These things cannot come but by the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, as

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<sup>17</sup>**Jeremiah 33:15.**

<sup>18</sup>**St. John 20:21-23.**

<sup>19</sup>**St. Matthew 16:19.**

<sup>20</sup>*Jeremiah*, p. 271.

Paul says, Rom. 1, 16: *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*<sup>21</sup>

**B. Through the Blessed Judgment of the Gospel, men dwell safely forever in life everlasting.**

Through the Blessed Judgment of the Church of Absolution of all sins for Christ's sake, men are saved and dwell safely. The prophet Jeremiah writes:

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she call be called, The LORD our righteousness.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Church is the righteous Branch Christ raises up through the Gospel because the Gospel is the Righteousness of God in Christ for all men.

The Church shares this Blessed Righteousness of Christ for all men through the Gospel, i.e, the Blessed Judgment of Absolution of all sin, so all may dwell safety forever with our Lord and Savior in His Everlasting Kingdom.

*Amen.*

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<sup>21</sup>The Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII. Of Ecclesiastical Power<sup>8-9</sup>, *Triglotta*, p. 85, amplification in brackets added.

<sup>22</sup>**Jeremiah 33:16.**