

FIRST ADVENT MIDWEEK SERVICE

Jeremiah 23:5,6

The LORD our righteousness

What a name, *the LORD our righteousness*. There is so much packed into those four words: *the LORD our righteousness*. Today, as we celebrate our first midweek Advent service, let us meditate on those four Spirit-saturated words: *the LORD our righteousness*.

The, He is *the* LORD. He is not “a” LORD. He is *the* LORD, and there is no other. This prophecy is not generic, vague, or confused. *The* LORD speaks clearly and He says *the* LORD will come. The One who comes and the One who declares are the same. They are *the* LORD.

LORD, He is the *LORD*. Notice that this word is all in caps. This is Yahweh, Jehovah. This was the holiest of all God’s names in the Old Testament. In fact, the Jews revered it so much that they stopped saying it, considering it blasphemy for such a powerful name to proceed from sinful lips. We call this name for God the *tetragrammaton*. It is the saving name of God. This is the God who delivered Abraham from every trial, who saved Israel from Egypt, who ransomed the exiles in Babylon, who was born in a manger to rescue a fallen human race from sin and death.

Our, we are the object of His attention and His benefits. This is personal. This is not some theoretical, irrelevant, impersonal message or speculation. This name is revealed to us and revealed for us. What follows is applied to us and declared concerning us; He is the LORD *our* righteousness. Have no doubt about it: this is about us.

Righteousness, He is our *righteousness*. All too often we read or hear words in the Scripture and do not stop to ask and contemplate what they mean. What is *righteousness*? The word *righteousness* is a word that is crucial to the doctrine of justification. So, what is justification? Justification is a courtroom word. It is God’s gracious declaration that the sinner is not guilty, not on account of the sinner’s own virtue or merits, but on account of Christ’s innocent death and glorious resurrection. The *righteousness* of God is nothing other than His goodness and mercy, whereby He absolves sin, confers grace, redeems from the devil, frees from death, and defends from every evil. The *righteousness* mentioned in this passage is the *righteousness* that is acceptable before God to merit eternal life. This *righteousness* is not our own by nature, but is Christ’s and is imputed to us by God through Word and Sacrament. This *righteousness* is the free gift of God, received by faith. It is only by this *righteousness* that we can stand before God in the Judgment, and it is precisely because this righteousness is the LORD’s that the LORD is satisfied with it.

“*The days are coming.*” This *righteous Branch* that is our righteousness and imputes His righteousness to us is coming. He has come. He came in a manger to be born in human flesh to reconcile humanity to the divine. He comes. He comes in Word and Sacrament and renews and increases in us what He began in our Baptism. He will come again, and *the days are coming*.

His coming is what Advent is all about, and *righteousness*, God’s *righteousness* made ours in Christ, is what His coming is all about. What grace! What mercy! What hope! *Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety*. God’s people will be rescued and protected. So who is God’s people? We are, by Holy Baptism. St. Paul writes, “*For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.'* In other words, *it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring*” (Romans 9:6-8). You are God’s people, because you are children of the promise, because you are believers, and there is no faith without a promise. Christ is coming, and He is coming for you, just as He came on Christmas, to bring peace, to bring grace, and to bring *righteousness*. He is our *righteousness*. His very name says it so; He is *the LORD our righteousness*. Isn’t that something? What a name! A name that tells us who He is; a name that tells us who we are. *The LORD our righteousness*.