

## Sermon: December 3, 2017 (Advent 1)

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Jeremiah 33:14-16

### The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

**<sup>14</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."**

*"The days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Judah...and I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land....The Lord is our righteousness."*

The words righteous...or righteousness are not words often used in everyday language...for some of us it is only at church that we hear or use this word...perhaps because this word is found nearly 600 times in the Bible...it is a word that is important in telling God's story.

Jeremiah lived during a time of the destruction and fall of Jerusalem The people had been beaten, taken captive and dragged from their land and denied their right to worship in the Temple. The people are in living a life of despair...they begin to question; where is God in all this? Has God abandoned us?

"The Lord is our righteousness." Jeremiah writes from a prison cell. Jeremiah the prophet is sharing the words he has been given by God...and these

are words of hope for the people of God... “the days are surely coming” ... a day when justice will prevail.

One of my favourite channels to watch on television is the History Channel and lately I have been watching is Hunting Nazi Treasure. In the show, investigators travel to hunt down thousands of objects, artifacts and pieces of art that were stolen by the Nazis at the end of World War 2. The hope is that through a thorough investigation, pieces that were stolen and have been lost for generations will eventually be returned to their rightful owners...the hope is that there will be justice. This show highlights some beautiful and unique material treasures that were lost or thought to be lost...but one thing the show doesn't do is highlight some of the real treasures that were lost during that time. The true lost treasures were the heroes of Nazi Germany...the people who worked for justice during a time not so different than that of Jeremiah's. A time when the many people of God were abused, held captive and stripped of their right to worship their God. One of the lost heroes of Nazi Germany was Sophie Scholl.

Sophie was brought up as a Lutheran Christian. At the age of twelve, like many of her peers, she joined a “pseudo-Nazi organization, the League of German girls.” At first she enjoyed the group, but over time she became uneasy about the Nazi ideology...her Jewish friends were banned from the group...she was reprimanded for reading a book authored by a Jew. Later her father was sent to prison for making a negative remark about Hitler. <sup>1</sup> The beliefs of the Nazi's did not align with what she had been taught and she was not satisfied to simply comply.

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<sup>1</sup> Sophie Scholl Biography. <https://www.biographyonline.net/women/sophie-scholl.html>

Sophie's background and strong Christian faith led her to study philosophy and theology. This became the cornerstone of her opposition to the Nazi ideology. Eventually, she became part of a Nazi resistance group referred to as "The White Rose" The group created and distributed anti-Nazi pamphlets to teach others about the truth behind the Nazi regime. These pamphlets described Hitler's rule as a "dictatorship of evil" and called for "Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the protection of individual citizens from the arbitrary will of criminal regimes of violence"<sup>2</sup>

At the age of 21 Sophie was caught trying to distribute these leaflets and was executed in 1943 for leading a student resistance against Hitler and the Nazis. Sophie's final words were "How can we expect righteousness to prevail there is hardly anyone willing to give himself up individually to a righteous cause. Such a fine sunny day, and I have to go, but what does my death matter if through us thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?"

Righteousness of God is to be the guiding principle for the people of God...Sophie was one person of God who let the guiding principle of righteousness guide her actions...actions that helped to bring attention to the injustices of Nazi Germany. Sophie gave her life so that others would understand that we the people are called to be the actors of righteousness...even if it causes us discomfort or pain or in her case...even death.

Jeremiah's people and the world around him were being destroyed...they waited in hope...in hope for a Messiah that would make the world new. ...and the

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<sup>2</sup> Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team. *White Rose Leaflets "Translation of the 6 printed leaflets."* <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/revolt/wrleaflets.html>

hope of that day did come...some 600 years later...in the form of a baby that would be born in a manger. The branch of David came in the form of a man...Jesus... who walked the earth and on one of those days, when Jesus, the branch of David walked the earth, and on the day of his Baptism when John the Baptist felt unworthy to baptize Jesus, Jesus responded; "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Fulfilling righteousness came not just through the Son of God...through the branch of David promised by Jeremiah fulfilling of righteousness, according to Jesus came through the actions of John...one who was ordained to be the hands of God.

It is during the season of Advent that we live in hope of a coming King...Jeremiah and followers of God for generations to come waited for Jesus...the branch of righteousness...the very one whose birth we have remembered on Christmas's past...who we will remember this coming Christmas...and who we will remember each year until His coming again. We live in a hope that is somewhat different than those of Jeremiah's people. We know that the Messiah came...we know that he lived his life as a great teacher... one that taught each person he came in contact with what it looks like to walk a life of justice. We know that he gave is life for righteousness...Advent is about waiting...but not for the Baby Jesus...we know that has happened. We know how that story played out. As Christians what we wait for is for the coming of Christ again...for a time when justice and righteousness prevail for all. It is a time for hope.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying all of the excitement that happens during this time of year, shopping, planning, preparing...lights a secular stories of

Santa and Rudolph and Frosty the Snowman. All of those give us can give us joy. And while we wait it is our job to be awakened and stirred by action that works toward created a kingdom, here on earth that represents God's righteousness. We must not forget that there during this season of preparation there are many who are suffering...who experience injustice, through hunger and debt...those who have been marginalized by systems of oppression...those who don't feel there is any hope. Many of those we can find in our own community and the communities around us. So while we wait in anticipation for the coming of a Christ that is just and right like John the Baptist we must be the hands that fulfill the righteousness of God. How do we do this...we remember and we act. We remember the people who have come before us whose actions have given us a better life today. We become willing to give of ourselves to righteous causes...perhaps this is through time...perhaps this is through our resources...perhaps it is through the use of our voice and speaking up when others are being wronged. Advent is a time for our opportunity of give the hope of Christ in all we meet.

Amen.