

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #3

READING I Jeremiah 33:14-16

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

The days are **coming**, says the LORD,
when I will **fulfill** the **promise**
I made to the house of Israel and Judah.
In those **days**, in that **time**,
I will **raise up** for David a just shoot;
he shall do what is **right** and **just** in the land.
In those days Judah shall be **safe**
and Jerusalem shall dwell **secure**;
this is what they shall call her:
"The **LORD** our **justice**."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14 (1b)

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
and for you I wait all the day.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the LORD are kindness
and constancy
toward those who keep his covenant
and his decrees.
The friendship of the LORD is with those
who fear him,
and his covenant, for their instruction.

Jeremiah = jayr-uh-Mi-uh
Jeremiah's words convey hope and
expectation. The promised future is possible
only because of the Lord's mercy and
generosity.
Judah = JOO-duh

Emphasize the words "right" and "just"
so that their connection to the safety and
security that comes when people live under
the ruler chosen by the Lord is the focus of
the last part of this reading.

For meditation and context:

READING I As we begin our new liturgical year and the season of Advent, the readings remind us that newness and hope for a better future can arise out of the troubled times of the past and present because God's promises endure. Christians live in this hope for the future and trust in God's omnipotence.

Writing during the waning years of the Davidic monarchy in Jerusalem, when Babylon threatened to destroy Jerusalem and its temple, and eventually did (587 BC), the prophet Jeremiah cannot ignore the past and present troubles. As a theological

interpreter of Judah's spiritual health, Jeremiah identifies the nation's infidelity to its covenant promises and the arrogance of its overconfident royal house as the primary causes for its demise and destruction. Assyria and Babylon are God's tools to discipline the nation.

Still, Jeremiah also gives voice to the Lord's determination to do something new with Judah and Israel, despite their punishment. God's gracious resolve will not be restrained by their past faithlessness, or even by the demands of just punishment. Today's passage features God's promise

that all will be fulfilled "in those days, in that time." God will restore the Davidic line by raising up a future "just shoot" who will act in obedience to the covenant by doing "what is right and just." This will ensure blessing and safety in Judah and Jerusalem. Thus, even from a dark and ominous present, a hope-filled future emerges.

READING II The First Letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul to the recently formed Christian community at Thessalonica, which was mostly made up of Gentile converts to

Thessalonians = thes-uh-LOH-nee-uhnz

Paul's words here convey both instruction and blessing. Allow your voice to offer encouragement to a believing and waiting community.

The tone here becomes more urgent but avoid picking up speed as you open this complex sentence.

Encouragement returns with the affirming "you are" and the future-oriented "do so even more."

READING II 1 Thessalonians 3:12—4:2

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

Brothers and sisters:

May the **Lord** make you increase and abound in **love for one another and for all**, just as **we** have for **you**, so as to **strengthen** your hearts, to be blameless in **holiness** before our **God and Father** at the **coming** of our **Lord Jesus** with **all his** holy ones. **Amen.**

Finally, brothers and sisters, we **earnestly** ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you **received** from **us** how you should conduct yourselves to please God —and as you **are conducting** yourselves— you do so even **more.**

For you know what instructions we gave you **through** the **Lord Jesus.**

Christianity. As the earliest writing in the New Testament, this letter begins a new phase in Paul's ministry—writing letters to newly founded communities. Although this is a new aspect of Paul's ministry, it builds upon what has come before, that is, the time Paul spent with those communities in person, sharing the Gospel. Prevented from visiting these new Christians, Paul sends Timothy to check on their well-being, especially as they have suffered affliction. Once he receives Timothy's positive report, Paul writes this letter which includes blessings

and exhortations, as we hear in today's reading.

First, Paul prays that God would increase their already abundant love "for one another and for all." This outward focus of their love "for all" is striking as they have been persecuted by others outside their community. This is the type of love Paul has shown in his sharing of the Gospel message. More importantly, this increase in love and its all-encompassing expression is a way to strengthen them and make them holy before God when the Lord Jesus comes in glory. Second, Paul exhorts them to con-

tinue to do what they have been doing but "even more." They have been acting in a way that is pleasing to God, as they learned from Paul. Paul's messages encourage the Thessalonians to stand firm in their faith and hope in Jesus, even in new situations.

GOSPEL

One of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel according to Luke relied on Mark's Gospel as its primary source of material, and it differed from Matthew's strong focus on Jewish Christians. Luke wrote his Gospel for Gentile Christians and made use of the

This is an exhortatory reading filled with catastrophic imagery. As we are waiting to celebrate the newborn king, we are also waiting for his return at the end of time.

Speak these words firmly, without overdramatizing them.

Let the words and your tone emphasize the contrast between fear and redemption.

carousing = kuh-ROW-zing

Vigilance is a key theme of this reading, so give solid emphasis to the words "all," "pray," "escape," and "stand."

tribulations = trih-byoo-LAY-shunz

imminent = IM-uh-nuhnt

GOSPEL Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus said to his disciples:

"There will be signs in the **sun**, the **moon**, and the **stars**,
and on earth nations will be in **dismay**,
perplexed by the roaring of the **sea** and the **waves**.

People will **die** of **fright**

in **anticipation** of what is coming upon the **world**,
for the powers of the heavens will be **shaken**.

And then they will see the **Son of Man**

coming in a cloud with **power** and **great glory**.

But when these signs begin to happen,

stand erect and **raise your heads**

because your **redemption** is at hand.

"**Beware** that your hearts do not become **drowsy**
from **carousing** and **drunkenness**
and the **anxieties** of daily life,
and that day catch you by **surprise** like a **trap**.

For **that** day will assault everyone

who lives on the face of the **earth**.

Be vigilant at **all** times

and **pray** that you have the strength

to **escape** the tribulations that are imminent

and to **stand** before the Son of Man."

writing styles of Gentile historians. Appearing some fifty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (the second volume of Luke's writing) teach that Jesus is not only the Son of God but is also *the* prophet who fulfills all prophecies.

Today's reading comes from the end of Jesus' Jerusalem ministry, which was dominated by conflict with the religious authorities. In this reading, we hear the third of three prophetic perspectives offered by Jesus. The first, in Luke 21:12–19, is Jesus' prediction that his followers would

suffer persecution and even death. In the second, Jesus describes the desolation of Jerusalem (Luke 21:7–11, 20–24). For Luke's community, these prophetic descriptions have already been fulfilled—they have been persecuted and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.

Today's Gospel forms the third and final prediction, now looking forward in time, even for Luke's community. The vision breaks out of the historical and temporal framework of the other two and is cosmological in focus; it looks at the fate of the entire world and its human inhabitants. In

spite of its frightening nature, the vision offers encouragement filled with good news. Jesus directs believers to "not become drowsy," to "be vigilant," and to pray. Far from recommending fear in the face of the coming Son of Man, Jesus' followers are encouraged to "stand erect and raise your heads." While everyone else may be shaking with fear, for Jesus' faithful followers this is not a time of dread or fear, but rather the time when "redemption is at hand."

We are encouraged to begin our new liturgical year with hope and faith in Jesus. S.L.