

Sun. next before Advent (2025)

Inflight magazines were once ubiquitous with flying. No more. Like so many things, they were a casualty of Covid.

Even so, you likely remember the maps in the back of these magazines. These maps showed flight patterns. Dots indicated cities served by the airline while red lines radiating from these dots pointed to destinations.

Imagine a similar map, only this time with the dots representing the promises and prophecies found in the Old Testament and the arching red lines all moving to a common destination . . . this common destination being Christ the Saviour.

“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen,” Paul says of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Get this picture in your mind, and you will understand how the Old Testament relates to the New.

More than that, you will be prepared for the season of the Church Year that we begin next Sunday – Advent.

Advent tells us of the arrival of the true King. Those planes which took off in the Old Testament have landed in the New.

This morning, I want to look at three passages of scripture which relate to the Advent of Christ, the first being the portion of scripture appointed for the Epistle at Holy Communion for this Sunday. It comes from Jeremiah 23.

In this reading, Jeremiah says: **“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch.”**

When you hear “Branch”, think of a limb of a tree. Many limbs on this tree are defected or diseased, but this One is good and perfect and beautiful. This “righteous branch” is, of course, Jesus, the new better David.

“He shall execute judgment and justice in the earth,” Jeremiah tells us.

He will do what all the kings that have gone before Him have not be able to do perfectly.

Let’s turn now to the Old Testament lesson appointed for Morning Prayer. It likewise comes from the pen of the 7th and 6th century prophet Jeremiah.

Here we find this prophet speaking a word of grace and hope to the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Soon they will be carried into exile into Babylon, but they mustn’t think God has

abandoned or forgotten them. A new day is coming for them.

In the past, their kings, for the most part, have been bad kings. Many led them into the worship of false gods. But that is going to change.

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding,” writes Jeremiah speaking in God’s name.

Ultimately, it will be one pastor or shepherd on king who will bring knowledge and understanding, Jesus the Messiah.

The day is coming when the old arrangement with its tables of Law engraven on stone will be superseded by something better: **“They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to**

mind: neither shall they remember it,” writes Jeremiah.

The day this OT prophet saw from afar arrived with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the King. He is Immanuel, God with us.

He writes the real intent of the Law engraven on stone on the tables of the heart.

But what about today’s New Testament reading?

Do we find in this passage a reference to an OT promise foretelling a new order and a new King? ///

Yes, we do. It comes just after the crowd has been fed and the excess food gathered up.

Speaking of Jesus, the people cry out: **“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”**

Behind these words is a promise and prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses is speaking:

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”

Jesus is that prophet. The promise and prophecy given through Moses has come to pass.

As we think about the three passages at which we have looked -- two from Jeremiah, the other from the Gospel of John – there is practical lesson that we should not miss.

It is this: **God's faithfulness in the past provides us with a powerful incentive to trust Him in the present.**

Let me give you an example. Jesus says in the Great Commission, "**Lo, I am with you always.**"

This promise can be claimed with confidence in the present because of God's past performance.

Claim it for yourself when you find yourself in darkness and danger. ///

Moving on. There is, however, a 'problem' – if you want to call it that – in what I have said thus far.

It is this: if the new age foretold by the prophets arrived with Jesus: why is there so much darkness in the world? Why the atrocities we hear about almost daily in the news?

One way of making sense of this apparent disconnect is to remember D-Day during the Second World War.

A decisive victory was won when the Allied troops crossed the channel into Normandy. This landing signaled the doom of the Nazis regime. In principle, the war was over.

Nevertheless, fighting continued a full 11 months before the Germans actual surrendered.

These 11 months correspond to the time in which you and I live.

On the cross, Jesus achieved a great victory.

The Serpent's head was mortally wounded.

Death itself was defeated.

Yet, fighting continues even as it did following D-day. It is here that you and I come

into the picture. In this period, we are called to be more than bystanders.

We have been accorded the privilege of being soldiers in Christ's army.

In no sense do we repeat Christ's achievement on the cross, but we do have a part to play in this cleaning-up operation.

How do we do this? /// No doubt there are a number of ways, but here are some suggestions:

- By announcing that the true king has landed and by making the case for Christ in a culture that is averse to absolute truth claims.
- By confronting and calling out the false values and rhetoric of the world. For example, when someone says that 'gender' is fluid, something one can decide . . . well . . . we call their bluff

. . . we take our stand with science and scripture and say, no, God made them male and female. Children, in particular, must not be drugged or mutilated.

- By fighting not only the demons without but those within . . . by waging war against our own deceits and misuse of the gifts God has given us.
- By picking up those who have fallen prey to the lies and deceits of the world system. These victims can be found on the streets of all our major cities and yes even right here in Blue Ridge.

The good news is final consummation is coming. Just as the promises in the Old Testament were faithfully and accurately fulfilled, so will those found in the New, in particular those relating our Lord's Second Coming.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand points forward to God's promised future.

It anticipates the Great Messianic Banquet at the end of the age at which all of God's children will share in Jesus' victory on the cross and will sit down with Him and share a great feast.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand also gives us direction in the present.

At the beginning of the story, the disciples were faced with a need that far exceeded the resources at hand.

In our own community, we are faced with a like dilemma. Weekly, if not daily, we receive calls at the church office from people needing help with their electric bills, single mothers needing help with their rent, stranded travelers needing help with gas money, and so on.

Thankfully, in this community we have something called the Good Samaritan Group. St. Luke's is part of that group.

It is a great program. Nevertheless, needs often exceed resources. It would be easy to become discouraged even cynical, but the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand provides us with prospective and hope. What is impossible with us IS possible with God. He is able to multiply our meager loaves and fishes. We move at His command and leave the rest to Him.

In closing, let us remember God's past acts of faithfulness and be encourage by them.

The planes which took flight in the OT have landed. Jesus is already reigning. Final victory is assured.

For these and all other blessings, let us be truly thankful in this season of Thanksgiving.