

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 33:14-16 ¹⁴' Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: ¹⁵'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

Sermon Theme: What's In a Name?

- THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the name of the Christ child, whose name is a source of great joy, peace, and hope, dear fellow redeemed;

“What’s in a name?” In answer to this question, Juliet of William Shakespeare’s play ‘Romeo and Juliet’ indicated that a name isn’t very important or meaningful. However, the writings of Holy Scripture impress upon us that when it comes to the various names of the promised Lord and Christ, a name is extremely important and meaningful.

And contrary to what Juliet thought about the significance of family names, they also can be very important and meaningful. When a husband and wife are blessed with the birth of a child, their offspring is given the family name, which in our culture is the last name of the parents. By giving their child this particular name, loving parents are indicating that they gladly accept this precious gift of God as their very own and that they will attend to the various needs of raising him or her. How very special it is for children to know that they are a part of a family where they have such loving parents.

On the other hand, it is a grievous and sorrowful experience for children to be brought into this world by so called parents who then abandon and forsake them or who abuse and mistreat them. Under such dreadful circumstances the offspring experiences the feelings of fear and being unloved. But then again, there are loving and giving married couples who adopt children that have been abandoned or have been orphaned in some way. And like as with a birth-child, when a couple gives the adopted child their family name, they are showing they gladly accept this child as their very own and that they will lovingly take care of all the needs of their new child.

There is another scenario concerning family matters and the giving of a name that is of even greater significance. It involves vast multitudes of people the world over in every generation. And it has an extremely important bearing on their earthly existence, extending into eternity. I am speaking of Jesus’ promised mission of coming into this world to make it possible for a world of sinners to be adopted into the family of the holy God and be given His very own special name.

In Old Testament times, the prophet Jeremiah recorded a divine prophecy that foretold this special event. From the opening words of our Scripture text we read of the

divine promise of Jesus' first coming, "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness.'" With this, the LORD foretold that Jesus would be coming from the human family tree of King David and that He would, in a sense, spring forth as a Branch.

The Hebrew word for branch here is never used for a twig or a single limb that makes up part of a tree. Rather it is a word that is referring to a new growth that comes out of the ground or from established roots which then grows to make up a new tree. In other words, when Jesus would come from the family roots of David, it was not to be for the purpose of carrying on a long line of a human family heritage that extended back for many centuries. Instead, His purpose for coming would be to establish a new and very special kind of family tree of countless souls all over the world. This would be a family of God that would spring forth from Jesus Christ.

When speaking of the family of God, often times we hear individuals saying that everyone is by nature a child of God, because the Creator God made us all. Contrary to this popular belief, we have learned from the Bible that since everyone is born in sin we are all by nature children of the devil, rather than children of God. We find the Word of God using such expressions as, aliens, foreigners, strangers, not a people of God, or without God to reveal that we are not by nature a part of the household of God.

In these troubled times for the human family where, in many cases, children are born into unloving, uncaring, and even hostile living environments, greater by far are the horrendous conditions of having the devil for the father of one's soul. While in his family, wretched souls are plagued with the feelings of fear, worry, guilt, anxiety, discontentment, greed, lust, or with a gnawing hateful and angry spirit with no hope of deliverance in sight. And they are faced with a dreadful judgment in the world to come of being forever tormented by the devil and his evil angels in hell.

We are reminded by Old Testament prophecies, like the one found in the book of Jeremiah, that our loving, compassionate, and merciful Creator God promised to send Jesus as our Savior to make it possible for us to be rescued and delivered from the family of the devil and be adopted by the heavenly Father as His very own children. The apostle Paul testifies of the fulfillment of this prophecy, as he writes in his letter to the Galatians, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal.4:4-7) The Evangelist John further testifies who among mankind are finally adopted into God's family, declaring that, "But as many as received Him (namely, Jesus Christ) to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Jn. 1:12,13)

Those who are adopted into the family of God are then to be given the family

name of God. In the book of Isaiah the Lord foretold His giving of a new name to the Church of believers, saying, “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name.” (Isa 62:1,2)

The wonderful truth that believers in Christ would be called by His name is brought out in today’s text with the words, “And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” When I first read these words of the sermon text, I thought this didn’t sound quite right. The way I remembered the prophecy in Jeremiah was “the name by which **He** will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and not as it is found here “the name by which **she** will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” After further study I came to realize that there are two places in Jeremiah where there are similar words to this affect with a slight variation. If you would please, open your bulletins to the sermon text, which is taken from Jeremiah 33:15,16 and compare it to what I will read from Jeremiah 23:5,6. “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is **His** name by which **He** will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

The two Scripture references sound very much alike with some minor exceptions, such as, one uses the male pronoun **He**, while the other uses the female pronoun **she** when speaking of who is to be called by the name: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. This difference is not an indication that Scripture is contradicting itself. Neither is it playing into the hands of feminists who would like to have us think that the Lord is of the female gender. No! The answer is to be found in this that the ‘He’ in the one prophecy is referring to the promised Savior, Jesus Christ, and the ‘she’ in the other prophecy is referring to the Church of believers, who in many other instances are spoken of in the feminine form. For example, in some portions of Scripture the Church of believers is identified as the bride of Christ.

Why are both Jesus and the Church of believers given the name THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS? It is, as we said before, because believers in Christ are to be called by His name, for through faith in Jesus Christ we are blessed with all that which Jesus has done for our redemption.

Jesus’ name, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, testifies of Him as the divine One, who through His righteous life and perfect death on the cross for us, has become for us our righteousness that avails before God, our righteousness that enables us to stand approved before God as His holy children, our righteousness that enables us to be welcomed into the eternal habitations of heaven. This righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, credited to our account, and given to us as our name, as we believe on Jesus Christ. Thus the Bible said of Abraham who believed in the promised Christ, “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen. 15:6)

When our heavenly Father calls us by Jesus' name, the LORD our righteousness, He is publicly declaring that even though we have fallen short of His glory in being guilty of sins and iniquities He is not ashamed of being called our God and is not ashamed of calling us His children. The book of Hebrews says as much as it makes this declaration concerning those Old Testament believers who died in the faith that the promised Savior would come to redeem them. We read there, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (Heb 11:13-16) Having been called by His name the Lord God assures us that He will ever bless us and ever guard and keep us as His children in His saving grace.

When we, in turn, acknowledge the name of Christ, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," as being our very own, we are confessing that we have no righteousness of our own that we can come before God with, but rather that we have only Christ's righteousness. With His righteousness and His alone we come before God with boldness and confidence, trusting that through Christ we will ever find forgiveness, God's grace and favor, and receive the ultimate blessing of life everlasting in heaven.

Concerning this last blessing and our being called by the Lord's name, listen to these words of Jesus found in the book of Revelation where, in anticipation of His second coming on the last day, He gives us these words of exhortation and encouragement, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." (Rev 3:11,12) As we look forward to Jesus' return to usher in eternity, our Savior urges us on to ever hold fast to Him and His gift of salvation in faith. As we persevere in the faith unto the end, the Lord Jesus gives us the glorious promise that we will be numbered among the saints of heaven who will have the name of God written on us, that is, we will enjoy an eternal existence in heaven as children of the heavenly Father.

Praise our Savior God for enabling us to be adopted into the family of God and being called by His name. Cling to Him evermore in faith so that when Jesus returns on the last day we will enjoy being called by His name in the eternal realms of heaven. Amen.