

Sunday, December 2, 2018 – First Sunday of Advent
“Safe and Secure”

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

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Analogy

Adapted from CSL “The King Is Coming”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Where do you live? Where do you call home? Not always an easy question to answer. Our mobile society keeps us moving... mobile, often unstable or even restless. In an electronic reality of constant beeps, buzzing, notifications and clicks reality itself feels stretched and smooshed at the same time, disorienting and confusing.

But we need a place to call home. Sociologists have observed how critical a safe and stable home is on child development – who’d have thought! Adults often recall fond childhood memories but also may have memories of times we wished we were in a different family or wanted to leave our home. Maybe like me you even packed your bags a time or two. We don’t know a ton about family dynamics in Bible times but we know that family, land and home were anchors in life where being on the road was no less dangerous than in our day.

Jeremiah plays on this theme of home – the home of a country, a nation, a people living in God’s kingdom. In the days of the Old Testament prophets the kingdom of God was under the human leadership of a king who was descended from King David. The king had his palace, as well as the temple in his capital city which became the focal point and identity of his rule and reign. That place of course is Jerusalem, often referred to as Zion. Zion is the citadel of God’s temple where God lives with His people. Of course problems would arise when the earthly king would forget that his palace was only next door to the real seat of power, God’s temple, and not the other way around – he ruled on God’s terms.

Jeremiah writes at a time when both king and temple are under threat from a foreign enemy – King Nebuchandezzar of Babylon. It wasn’t an accident, as if God had suddenly become ineffective. Jeremiah spoke the truth to the earthly king – you and the people have forsaken God. You’ve followed your own heart and the religious practices of the world and assumed you could pacify and appease God by doing just enough, paying Him lip service – keep the temple worship and sacrifices and offerings going and God will protect us. The temple was treated like some kind of charm, a lucky rabbit’s foot. So Jeremiah calls it out, against the

people complaining, asking why isn't God saving us, and so-called prophets telling the king good things that he wants to hear, prophesying of a coming peace when there was no peace. Jeremiah stands up to the king and the false prophets under siege by Babylon and speaks the truth. For his honesty he's put in stocks and then into a prison cell.

But Jeremiah had a bigger picture in mind – yes he knew of God's judgment but he also knew all this was part of a bigger plan to restore the whole world. Right in the middle of this doom and gloom judgment stuff comes a section in his book that talks about God's everlasting love and commitment to his people. Yes, God would punish them, with a tough love that takes discipline seriously. Yes, their sin had to be punished, yes, Jerusalem, the "home" of both the king and the people would be lost and they'd turn into refugees in exile from their homeland.

God has a future and a hope for them. In fact, just as the siege of Jerusalem was underway, Jeremiah bought a field. Yes, a real estate investment – to highlight his certainty that God was committed to bringing His people back to their home. Jeremiah saw a future for king and the city and described them in the same way: "In those days (those days to come, when God would fulfill His promises once and for all) and at that time (In God's time, not ours), I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it (Jerusalem) will be called: Yahweh is our righteousness."

Have you been away from home too long? You know the feeling, it can get rough out there, sometimes it's even rough at home but deep inside we long for a home that is safe and sound, where we are loved, safe and secure.

Imagine how it felt for those poor souls from Jerusalem when they woke up in Babylon! This was no exotic vacation to see the Hanging Gardens – they were in exile, far from home. Yet for them, and for us today God has provided a place, right here on earth where he calls us home. It's a place far greater than any capital city in the world. It's even greater than the most loving safe and secure home for any family. It's a place where true peace and justice, righteousness and salvation are found. It is totally dependent on God, rather than some effort that we'd make toward safety and security for ourselves and our loved ones.

Back then in the time of Jesus there was one born from the house and line of David. He would outshine David as a King – David's son but also David's Lord. And He came to be a new and greater temple and city – in Jesus, God would live on earth right in the middle of His people.

This wasn't just for 2,000 years ago though, it is for us today. As we prepare during Advent for Jesus to come we can celebrate, right here and now the home God gives us. Call it a city of you will, a temple, a place to call home where God is with us. Call it church, or your faith family, or the Body of Christ where king and city merge together in one person and one place, where His body and blood are here for us to forgive us, renew us and empower us to be the place where God lives out in the world for everyone. In Jesus' name, Amen.