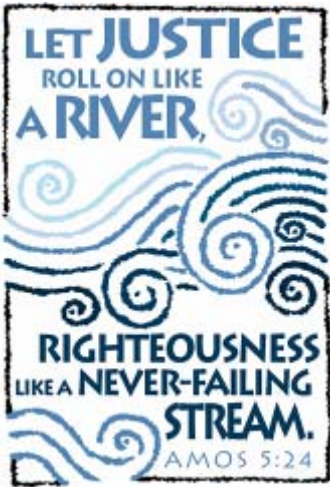


## TOWARDS A BETTER TOMORROW

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, December 3, 2006



Jeremiah 33:14-16

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. 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. 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."

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Advent is here! The first candle is burning brightly! I wish all of you could see yesterday how members of our church family shared in the joy of decorating the inside and outside of our beautiful sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. The Advent song this morning was, "Light one candle in the night. Light one candle of faith; Faith that can heal a world in need, Faith that can conquer hate and greed, Faith in a child who will come to lead. Light one candle of faith!" The season of love and goodwill is here! There is a message of joy surrounding us this morning and we dare not be unhappy or think gloomy thoughts.

Some are a bit slow to join in the spirit. There is a Peanuts Cartoon where Lucy says, "Boy do I feel crabby." Linus responds, "Maybe I can be of help. Just take my place here in front of the TV while I go and fix you a nice snack! Linus returns with a sandwich, chocolate chip cookies and a glass of milk. He says, "Is there anything I have not thought of?" Lucy took the tray of food and replied, "Yes, there's one thing you haven't thought of." Then she screams, "I don't want to feel better!" Please feel better and rekindle the burning candle of faith in your life and heart today.

The same Jeremiah, who so often had harsh words of condemnation for the sins and failures of the people, now brought a message of hope and expectation. It was a time when hostile forces surrounded the country. The enemy overpowered them and treated them harshly. Justice and righteousness were in scarce supply. The prophet Jeremiah was powerless to do something to change their lot. However, he spoke with faith and comforted the people with a prophecy – words of reassurance and promise!

"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. 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."

This prophecy of Jeremiah was expressing the deepest yearning of the suffering people. That one day all the wrong will be made right; that one day they and their children will suffer no more injustice and unrighteousness. It was midnight dark and the prophet was talking about daybreak.

Modern media brings the horror of our times into our living rooms. Can you imagine the fear gripping the hearts of people in Baghdad every time when they have to go to the market – move out on the streets, even going to bed at night? How must they long for safety, for peace, to live and to go to bed with anxiety and fear! So many people across the world are victims with little or no control over all the injustices, brought about by the power and rule

of godless.

A well-known gangster was on trial for murder. There were many witnesses. The case was airtight. That was why the judge almost keeled over when the jury found him not guilty. "Not guilty?" the judge shrieked, "But how? Why?" The answer came, "By reason of insanity." The judge howled, "What ~ are all twelve of you insane?"

That is how we sometimes feel when we hear about some injustice. It is repulsive to us that some people get away with murder literally. We want to see bad guys punished and good guys rewarded. There is something built into the very fabric of our being that yearns for justice.

**Our faith centers on the life, sacrifice and the message of Jesus Christ.** Jesus proclaimed and explained God's peace in times of war and misery. He spoke of a time when the playing fields of this world will be leveled. The days are coming when that which is unfair will be set right. When the Bible speaks of justice, it is not merely talking about individual justice, but for a just society with basic fairness for all people. The call is for a different kind of society – a society where all persons will live in dignity and freedom.

Sometime ago, there was an unusual court ruling by a judge in Boston. This judge ordered **a local slumlord** to live in one of the rat-infested buildings that he owned. The results were so startling that Hollywood made a movie out of it. The slumlord, after feeling sorry for himself, became aware of the plight of the people around him. He befriended them; he helped them, and bettered their lives in many ways. **Eventually they saw his example followed his advice and started cleaning up their own environments and lives.** Those who could went out to find work and the condemned building was transformed into a nice, clean and safe building -- the best in the neighborhood. Without realizing it, Hollywood preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, teaching us the way and setting the ultimate example of changing injustice into justice. Jesus Christ prepared all those who would receive him for a better tomorrow, when true justice will be the norm and not the exception. **The days are coming when there will be justice and righteousness. If justice refers to the state of our society, then righteousness refers to the state of our individual lives.** These ideals are like two sides of the same coin. Amongst the highest and noblest of our nation's character and ideals, strived, worked and even died for, is a society that honors God, not only with words, but also with deeds of fairness and justice where people live in harmony and treat others, as they desire to be treated.

During Advent, we are not merely preparing our Sanctuary, or only displaying the Christmas lights and decorations, but we are proclaiming our deepest faith and desire to follow the one whom we call the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World!

It is not the harmony or the loudness of our carols, but our concern, care and faithful deeds of love to help our neighborhood and world become better places to live in. O Come Emmanuel, come into our lives; shape our faithful words and deeds to make this Advent season not only one of expectation but also one of spiritual fulfillment.

"O come, Desire of Nations, bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind;  
Make envy, strife, and quarrels cease;  
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace." [NCH 116:7]

AMEN