

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. Words from our first reading today from the 33rd chapter of the prophet Jeremiah – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

You hear it everywhere you go: as you are out and about doing your normal errands or at stores trying to cross things off the Christmas list, at work as your coworkers turn the volume up and as the loud speakers try to foster the holiday spirit, on the radio as you get in your car and drive from place to place, we hear it at our children's concerts and as people go about caroling, as you surf online on Amazon because Pandora is happens to be playing in the background, even turning everything else around you off you catch yourself humming those familiar jingles because they are now stuck in your head... that's right, Christmas music - it's everywhere and it's already been playing for some time. Certainly, there are different opinions as to when we should start playing these songs or why we stop hearing them on December 26th even though the Christmas Season is really just getting underway, but by and large, we do enjoy Christmas songs and appreciate the message they herald. Every year around this time, I find myself picking out a particular song to be my favorite for that year. "Marshmallow World", "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas", and "O Holy Night" are just some of my favorites throughout the years. Given the gloom and darkness that many others and I have felt in our Church and our world throughout 2018, I've already made it up in my mind that this year's song of choice is going to be "Grown-Up Christmas list." It's not even really a Christmas song per se – it's truly more of an Advent song, appropriately speaking to the hopes and dreams that reside deep in our hearts and what we desire from Jesus when Christmas comes. I hope you don't mind, but I think that it's worth listening to today.¹

Pope Benedict XVI said, "To have Christian hope means to know about evil and yet to go to meet the future with confidence." "Human beings can live forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only one second without hope." So essential is hope to human life that human beings cannot live without it, without something to live for, without something to look forward to. We can find all sorts of things to live for and we can hope for almost anything: for some measure of success or security or for the realization of some more or less modest ambition; for our children, that they might be saved

¹ Amy Grant, "Grown-Up Christmas List." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmF2rsDHOZc>.

from our mistakes and sufferings and find a better life than we have known; for a better world, throwing ourselves into politics or technology or medicine so that future generations might be better off. I'm sure that there are many things that we could mention on our grown-up Christmas lists and it should be stated that not all these forms of hope are selfish either; indeed, they have given dignity and purpose to the lives of countless generations. One of the reasons why we read the Old Testament during Advent is to learn what to hope for. The people of the Old Testament had the courage to hope for big things: that the desert would be turned into fertile land; that their scattered and divided people would eventually be gathered again; that the blind would see, the deaf hear, the lame walk; that not only their own people, but all the peoples of the earth, would be united in the blessings of everlasting peace. Clearly, their hopes were no different from ours or from any human being's: lasting peace, tranquil lives, sufficiency of food, and an end to suffering, pain, and misery. Thus we hope for the same things, for such hopes are not yet realized.²

If we could save ourselves, we would, and yet after thousands of years of trying, the human race finds itself still stuck in the same old evils, plagued with the same old problems. We need a savior in whom we can place our hope. The season of Advent we enter today as a Church puts us in touch with our capacity to hope in Jesus. Indeed, Jesus is the reason for our hope. All of our readings today speak to his coming again to bring about the realization of all of God's promises, and yet that Jesus has already come into the world proves that our hope in this Messiah is sure. Jesus has revealed that God is not far off but already in our midst. Through Jesus, God has already inaugurated his glorious reign and Kingdom as storms were calmed, as demons were cast out, as people received mercy and were healed, fed, taught, cared for, and brought to new life. We *know* that our hopes are fulfilled in Jesus, are being fulfilled in Jesus even today, and so we wait in joyful hope for his coming again. As we craft our grown-up Christmas list, we come to find that in the middle of our longings we discover the footprints of the one who has created them. As we await the Savior's coming we learn just how much he has filled our lives already. Just as the love of a mother for her son can grow while she is waiting for his return, and just as lovers can rediscover each other during long periods of absence, so also our relationship with God can become deeper and more mature while we wait patiently in hope-filled expectation for his coming. So let us humbly say this Advent season: *Maranatha*, that is "O Come Divine Messiah, Come!"

² Taken from "Spirit of Advent" Mark Searle, in *Assembly* Volume 7:1 (Notre Dame Center for Liturgy: Notre Dame, IN).

Weekend Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/120218.cfm>

First Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 3

Reading 1 [JER 33:14-16](#)

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 [PS 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14](#)

R. (1b) **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.

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

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

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

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.

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

Reading 2 1 [THES 3:12—4:2](#)

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.

Alleluia [PS 85:8](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Show us, Lord, your love;
and grant us your salvation.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [LK 21:25-28, 34-36](#)

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.”