

Think about 600 years.

600 years ago, there were only indigenous peoples living in North America.

600 years ago, Martin Luther was not even born.

In 600 years, we have seen inventions from the printing press to the smartphone,

We have seen social movements shift from geo-ethnic tribes to common interest tribes.

In 600 years, and assuming a new generation every 25 years, that's 24 generations of a family. If each generation had 3 children, that family would have grown from 2 to 13,824.

600 years – that's about how long it was between the prophecy of Jeremiah to its fulfillment in Jesus.

Tweet this:

- Faith is trusting the promises of God to be fulfilled even if it is not in your lifetime.
- **Faith is trusting God to keep promises even when everything appears to be going wrong.**
- Faith is enduring the now in the hope of God's future.

Because Faith is in God who is bigger than the universe.

The Word of the Lord through Jeremiah and the Word of the Lord on Jesus' lips today begin with the same theme: "The days are surely coming."

Both messages are delivered in a time of tumult in the world and decay in the institutional life of God's people.

In other words, these messages are delivered to people whose experience of life is not so different from ours today.

Jeremiah foretold the fall of Jerusalem to foreign powers as God's judgment upon his people.

- What had they done to deserve this?
- Why had God hidden his face from them?
- They had willfully and systemically rebelled against the covenant God made with them.
- They became corrupt in an effort to be prosperous and happy;
- They had oppressed the poor by making them work on the Sabbath, against the command of the Lord.
- They offered child sacrifices to foreign gods and set up idols to worship.

These were both individual transgressions against God's commandments

and behaviors that were tolerated by the people as a whole.

I call it the "If I'm not struck down by lightning it must be OK" syndrome.

The thing is, that's a lie.

God has been clear from the get-go that his commandments are the foundation of the life he wants his people to live

and that there are consequences for disobedience.

Jeremiah laments that for 23 years he and other prophets have spoken the word of the Lord calling the people to stop their evil ways and return to the covenant, but they would not listen.

Not only did they continue making it impossible for the poor and disenfranchised to live while leaders and rulers became filthy rich,

but they did the equivalent of sticking their fingers in their ears and going “La la la” while the preachers were preaching God’s Word of life to them.

In other words, God was being patient with his rebellious people, but allowed them to reach the point of choosing their own fate by their refusal to repent.

Some of the misery we experience as human beings is the consequence of failing to live as God intends for us.

It is the result of our own willfulness.

We are the children of God – in the best sense of being beneficiaries of God’s love

– but sometimes we behave like children in the worst sense, and reap the consequences.

The verse that is repeated most often in the Bible is this one:

*“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-7; Rev. 3:19; Deut 8:5 and others

So what we do matters. How we live in relation to God’s commandments matters to God.

Sometimes God lets us experience the painful consequences of our actions to show us the error of our ways.

God does this because God loves us and wants the best for us.

But during that time of discipline, it is easy to lose hope, to become discouraged, and to question faith.

It is into this spiritual vulnerability that both Jeremiah and Jesus speak a message with the theme : “The days are surely coming when everything will be put right.”

Jesus came as the Righteous descendant of David to rule over God’s people with justice and righteousness.

- No more would the poor be trampled
- or powerful and wealthy elite run the show.
- Women would be empowered,
- the unclean given voice,
- sinners forgiven and
- debtors reinstated with a clean slate.
- Ordinary people were chosen to lead
- and the outcasts were welcomed into the inner circle.

Jesus fulfilled the promise of God to his people long ago – but it was not primarily a temporal fulfillment, but a spiritual one.

Political Jerusalem did not live in safety and security with Jesus at the helm of God’s people,

But those who staked their life on Jesus found eternal safety and security in him.

Their future was bound up with a Savior who rose from the dead.

This very Savior

– the Lord Jesus who was born to inhabit humanity
and to redeem us completely from the tyranny of our own rebellious wills by his death and resurrection
– this very Savior is coming.

He is coming into this world

- with its terrorism, fake news,
- social media altars and cybergods,
- divided politics and empty pews,
- climate change and cancer.

Jesus is coming.

He has promised.

And like every promise of God, we may or may not see it fulfilled in our lifetime.

But we must be ready for that fulfillment at any time.

Advent means “Coming”.

Jesus is coming. The Day of the Lord is coming.

Jesus' words in the Message puts it this way:

4-36 “But be on your guard. Don’t let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it’s going to come on everyone, everywhere, at once. So, whatever you do, don’t go to sleep at the switch. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that’s coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man.”

Strength to stand is given by Jesus himself, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

May the life we receive here give us power to be faithful each day as we wait and prepare for the Great Advent of our Lord Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Jeff Cavins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnGPmvA15ws>