**Why Advent?**

Jeremiah 33: 14-16; Luke 21: 25-36

Advent 1; December 2, 2018

**为什么需要基督降临节？**

耶利米书33: 14-16，路加福音21: 25-36

基督降临节第一个主日 2018年12月2日

**Text 1: 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. 15 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. 16 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."

**经文之一：耶利米书33：14-16**

**14**“看哪！日子快到（这是耶和华的宣告），我必实践我向以色列家和犹大家应许赐福的诺言。 **15**在那些日子、那时候，我必使大卫公义的苗裔长起来；他必在地上施行公正和公义。 **16**在那些日子，犹大必得救，耶路撒冷必安然居住；这城必被称为‘耶和华是我们的公义’。

**Text 2: Luke 21, 25-36**

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." 29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

**经文之一：路加福音21, 25-36**

**25**“日月星辰将有异兆；在地上，各国也要因着海洋波涛的咆哮而困苦不安。 **26**天上的万象震动，人因为等待即将临到世界的事，都吓昏了。 **27**那时，他们要看见人子，带着能力，满有荣耀，驾着云降临。 **28**一有这些事，你们就当挺身昂首，因为你们的救赎近了。”

**29**耶稣又给他们讲了一个比喻：“你们看看无花果树和各样的树。 **30**它们甚么时候发芽，你们看见了，就知道夏天近了。 **31**同样，你们甚么时候看见这些事发生，也应该知道　神的国近了。 **32**我实在告诉你们，这一切都必定发生，然后这世代才会过去。 **33**天地都过去，但我的话决不会废去。

**34**“你们应当自己小心，免得在贪食醉酒和生活的挂虑压住你们的心的时候，那日子突然临到你们， **35**正如网罗临到全地的所有居民。 **36**你们要时刻警醒，常常祈求，好让你们能逃避这一切要发生的事，可以站在人子面前。”

**Reflection反思：**

Towards the end of November and into December, evening comes early. During this liturgical season we are caught between joyful expectation and the harsh realities of the present world; we are waiting for the promise of God to be fulfilled. In this North American culture, as soon as daylight savings time ends, people start to decorate their houses with Christmas lights to signify we are moving into the holiday season. When holiday carols blare from every speaker and the neighborhood is glowing with displays of lights, there is no room for darkness and little patience for prayerful expectation. Yet, there are many people living out of sync with our surroundings. In this time of a new beginning and sacred place, we are invited to reflect more deeply on the meaning of Advent, this time of living in the unsettling tension between what is and what will be.

快到十一月底进入十二月的时候，天黑的早了。在这个礼拜仪式的季节里，我们夹在喜悦的期待和当今世界的严酷现实之间; 我们等候神的应许得以实现。在北美文化中，夏令时一结束，人们就开始用圣诞灯装饰房屋，这意味着我们即将进入圣诞季节。当圣诞颂歌从每一个喇叭中响起，邻居们兴奋地展示他们的圣诞灯，没有了黑暗，也没有耐心祈祷期望。然而，仍有许多人与我们周围环境是不同步的，在一个新的开始的时刻和神圣的地方，我们被邀请更深入地思考基督降临节的意义。在基督降临节中，我们生活在“什么是”和“什么将是”之间，令人不安和紧张之中。

It was some seventeen years ago in 2001, a time of crisis in my life. I was in ministry in a promising Korean congregation in downtown Toronto, but my contract with the Church had ended since the call was not offered to me. So I applied to the settlement process in the United Church to go to a pastoral charge anywhere in Canada. Then it was a matter of waiting. I would not learn of our destination until about six months later; I could be settled anywhere, from Halifax to Yellowknife or anywhere in between. The time was brutal for us, ten months of unemployment, studying at Emmanuel College to finish my Master’s degree and supporting our family with two children aged two and three. Living in that unsettling situation while facing an unknown future was not an easy task.

那是大约17年前的2001年，我生命中的一个危机时刻。我在多伦多市中心一个有前途的韩国教会中当牧师，因为合同没有再续签，所以和教会的合同已经终止了。由于当时我正在申请与联合教会签订协议，并打算去往联合教会在加拿大的任何地方做牧师。那段等候的时间持续了将近六个多月，之后我才知道被派往的目的地；我可以在任何地方定居，无论是Halifax 还是Yellowknife，或者在两者之间的任何地方。时间对我们来说是残酷的，十个月的失业，在以马内利神学院学读完我的硕士学位，同时支持我们的家庭，两个分别是2岁和3岁的孩子。在这种令人不安的情况下生活，同时面对未知的未来并不是一件容易的事情。

**吟唱回应Sung Response: VU 7, *希望之星Hope Is a Star* (verse 1)**

Hope is a star that shines in the night,

leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,

and none shall be afraid

One day around this time of year, while I was studying in the library of Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto, I heard beautiful music coming from somewhere. It was a familiar tune; it was slowly permeating my body and embracing me, and I reached the point when I could not concentrate on my reading any longer. So I stopped and left the library to follow the sound. It led me to the chapel. No one else was there but the music professor was playing, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, the same hymn we sang today. In the empty chapel the hymn filled me with assurance and hope for our future. There, while I was listening to the hymn, I realized I was weeping.

有一年大概也是这个季节，有一天，当我在多伦多大学以马内利神学院图书馆学习时，我听到了来自某个地方的美妙音乐。这是一个熟悉的曲调，它正慢慢地渗透到我的身体，拥抱着我，我已经到了无法集中精力阅读的地步。于是我停下来，离开了图书馆，跟着声音走。它带我去了礼拜堂。没有人在场，只有音乐教授在演奏 - *以马内利来临歌，*就像我们今天唱的那首赞美诗歌。在空荡荡的教堂里，赞美诗歌使我充满了对我们未来的信心和希望。在那里，当我在听赞美诗歌的时候，我意识到我在哭泣。

That was during my second year studying at Emmanuel. Because I was working in a busy Church as its fulltime minister, I always had to return to the Church as soon as any class finished, so I rarely attended the Wednesday community worship services at Emmanuel. Now, without work, I attended the service and realized I was not alone; the chapel was filled with colleagues hoping soon to be ordained ministers, and I sensed that I had found the community I needed. Even though I did not know whether I would become a successful candidate for settlement or where our family might be heading for our next pastoral charge, I had found a community there while singing the hymn with others. Together with these people I was journeying with the empowering Spirit. With the assurance of God’s presence, I would continue to journey into the future. I was living in Advent, this time of living in the unsettling tension between what is and what will be.

那是我在以马内利神学院的第二年。因为我在一个繁忙的教堂当全职牧师，所以每次上课一结束，我就必须回到教会，所以我很少参加周三在以马内利神学院举行的社区敬拜活动。现在，因为没有了牧师的工作，我参加了学院的敬拜仪式。我看到很多人，教堂里挤满了希望很快成为牧师的同事，我感觉到我找到了我需要的社区。尽管我不知道我是否能成为成功的候选人，也不知道我们一家将去哪个教区，但我在学院里找到了一个社区，和其他人一起唱赞美诗歌。我和这些人一起，带着那具圣灵给的力量前行。有了上帝的与我同在，我将继续前往未来。我生活在基督降临节的期盼中，生活在“什么是”和“什么将是”之间，让我觉得不安和紧张。

**吟唱回应Sung Response: VU 7, *希望之星Hope Is a Star* (verse 2)**

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,

giving a promise of safety and worth.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,

and none shall be afraid

Jeremiah was living in that very difficult time before, during and after the Exile. His country, Judah, had been defeated by Babylon in 587 BCE. At that time the Judeans were carried into exile and the city and its Temple were completely destroyed. Living in this very hopeless situation, Jeremiah speaks the language of hope. He says, “When Babylon’s seventy years are completed I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place” (29: 10).

耶利米在流放之前、和流放期间以及之后都生活在非常困难的时期。他的国家犹大在公元前587年被巴比伦打败。那时犹太人被掳，城和殿都被毁坏了。耶利米生活在这种非常绝望的环境中。耶利米所用的是希望的言语，他说“耶和华这样说：‘为巴比伦所定的七十年满了以后，我必眷顾你们，向你们实行我满有恩惠的诺言，把你们带回这地方来。”（耶利米书29:10）

What does the language of hope mean to Jeremiah and his people in the time of Exile? According to today’s scripture, “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel.” Jeremiah gives the people hope to imagine, in the midst of their exile, the new Temple and new life they will live in in the post-exile community. He projects a radical new vision and hope into their life in exile. His hope is not vague and not a wish list, but concrete and realistic.

在流亡时期，希望的言语对耶利米和他的人民意味着什么？根据今天的经文，“日子快到,这是耶和华的宣告，我必实践我向以色列家和犹大家应许赐福的诺言。”耶利米给了人们希望：在他们流亡当中，流放后将回到自己的国家并有新的社区生活和新的圣殿。他为他们的流亡生活注入了一种激进的新视野和希望。他的希望不是模糊的，不是愿望清单，而是具体和现实的。

How, then, are Jeremiah and the people enabled to uphold their vision and hope during the Exile? They are living without land or Temple, but in their poverty, they dream and hope for the future. The basis of hope, says Jeremiah, is not in material things like land or Temple, but in doing “justice and righteousness” (33:15). Only by living “justice and righteousness” can the people of Israel return home and rebuild their communal life in their homeland. Justice and righteousness are the foundation and cornerstone of the new community of Israel. Upon this basis only will Judah be saved and Jerusalem live in safety. In Advent we are living with the unsettling tension between what is and what will be. The people of Israel find hope and peace to build a country based on doing justice and righteousness.

那么，耶利米和人民如何能够在流放期间坚守他们的远见和希望呢？他们没有土地，没有圣殿，只有贫困，但是他们有对未来有梦想和希望。耶利米说，希望的基础不是土地或圣殿等物质的东西，而是要做“公正和公义”(33：15)。只有活在“公正和公义”里，以色列人民才能返回家园，在自己的家园重建他们的共同生活。公正和公义是以色列新社区的基础和基石。只有在这个基础上，犹大才能得救，耶路撒冷才能安全。在“基督降临节”中，我们生活在“什么是”和“什么将是”之间，令人不安和紧张之中。以色列民在建立一个公正和正义为基础的国家中发现了希望与和平。

**吟唱回应Sung Response: VU 7, *希望之星Hope Is a Star* (verse 3)**

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,

telling the world that the Saviour is born.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,

and none shall be afraid

In our busy life we may wonder why we need Advent. We may think that we don’t have time to wait. Why do we need a season of Advent before Christmas? The season of Advent brings the future into the present. In my case, through the time of waiting, I became who I am to be. Advent helped me to see beyond my life, a time of disruption and instability. I was living within the unsettling tension between what is and what will be, and the tension helped me to grow. When I look back, I sense I was being led by God’s hands. In the settlement process for my future ministry I was offered the unexpected choice of going to Oxford Presbytery in London Conference rather than Manitoba and Northwest Ontario Conference. I accepted the offer and moved on.

在我们繁忙的生活中，我们可能会想，为什么我们需要基督降临节。我们可能认为我们没有时间等待。为什么在圣诞节之前我们需要一个基督降临的季节？基督降临的季节将未来带入现在。就我而言，在等待的过程中，我成了现在的我。基督降临节帮助我发现超越我生活的层面，一个混乱和不稳定的时代。我生活在“什么”和“什么将是”之间的令人不安的紧张之中，这种紧张的关系帮助我成长。当我回首往事时，我感觉到当时我被上帝的手所牵引。在我后来的事工中，我得到了一个意想不到的选择：位于伦敦区域的牛津长老会，而不是去Manitoba省和安大略省西北区域。当时我接受了这个邀请，继续前进。

Advent offers us the opportunity to live faithfully in the present, yet to realize the unknown future. The tension is between our sense of reality and our sense of God’s vision for our future. As we faithfully hope for a future of living justice and righteousness, the future breaks into our present. Why Advent? Advent points us to see beyond our present to our dreams for the future. At a time when it seems that only violent events are given the spotlight, Advent gives us the lens through which to see God at work. Why Advent? Advent assures us that God has secured a future for us that becomes our present, and truly changes our here and now.

基督降临节让我们有机会忠实地活在当下，去实现未知的未来。紧张是在我们对现实的感觉和上帝对我们未来的憧憬之间。当我们忠实地希望有一个充满公义和公正的未来时，未来就会进入我们的现在。为什么有基督降临节？基督降临节使我们超越了现在，看到了我们对未来的梦想。在似乎只有暴力事件才会给聚光灯的时候，基督降临节会给我们一个镜头，让我们透过这个镜头来看到上帝在作工。为什么有基督降临节？基督降临节向我们保证，上帝已经为我们锁定了一个未来，它将成为我们的现在，并真正改变了我们的此时此刻。

As we are entering to this new season of Advent, we are invited to the communion table. Come, come to the table of Jesus. Thanks be to God who is living and working among us. Amen.

当我们进入这个基督降临的新季节时，我们被邀请到圣餐桌上。来，到耶稣的桌子前来。感谢与我们一起生活和工作的上帝。阿门。

**吟唱回应Sung Response: VU 7, *希望之星Hope Is a Star* (verse 4)**

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,

Jesus has come and will never depart.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,

and none shall be afraid

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