

Jer. 33:14–16

Ps. 25:1–10

1 Thess. 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

Promise and Hope

**Goal for
the Session**

Tweens will hear Jeremiah’s words of comfort and look forward to a world where justice and righteousness prevail.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Jeremiah 33:14–16

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Angela Bauer-Levesque

Opening with a formula typical of salvation oracles, “the days are surely coming,” verse 14 introduces divine first-person speech. God is assuring the audience that God will fulfill “the promise,” literally “the good word” with a definite article—not “a” promise, one of many, but a particular one made to both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Harkening back to Jeremiah 23:5–6, another eschatological interlude, verse 15 reiterates what was promised there, namely, that God will birth a “righteous” (*tsedaqah*) offspring of the Davidic monarchy, who will act in ways that will promote “justice and righteousness” (*mishpat* and *tsedaqah*).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Jennifer Ryan Ayres

Here we meet the God who promises to protect and restore the people, even as they are in the midst of great suffering and at the edge of despair. It is in precisely this context that God speaks the promise, and it is in precisely this context that despair opens the door to creativity and hope. Calvin acknowledged that the promises of God seem to disappear, but that with faith and patience, we look forward to their fulfillment.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Deborah A. Block

This text insists that covenantal life in all its expressions is characterized by justice and righteousness, allowing no dichotomy of “prophetic” and “pastoral.” Life together is to embody the nature of God, “The LORD is our righteousness.” Jeremiah uses the name first for a promised person (23:6) and again here, intentionally, for a promised place (33:16). The vision of the time to come impugns the time at hand. What leader and what community could claim “The LORD is our righteousness”? The promise challenges our reality, and drives a reappropriation of “righteousness.” The word is uncommon, if not pejorative, in common parlance and unwelcome in the lexicon of many faithful because of its frequent companionship with “self.”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Gary W. Charles

As I listen to the cries of Jeremiah throughout the scope of his prophecy, I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future will be a reality beyond the violent boastings of the ruling Babylon of the day. I long for the day that is surely coming when in God’s future the poor are not sent to shelters or forced to sleep on the streets. I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future has no space for violence, when we will stop producing body bags—because there are no dead soldiers to fill them. I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future affords no room for rancor, a day when our world is no longer torn asunder by racism and sexism and homophobia.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 33:14–16

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ blue or purple cloth or place mat
- ❑ shallow bowl
- ❑ reflective glass beads or floral stones
- ❑ 4 votive candles, matches or battery-powered votives
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 31, 32
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- ❑ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ❑ pens
- ❑ Bibles

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: mural or bulletin board paper, markers; Internet-connected device (optional)
- ❑ option 2: writing paper; pens; song: “We Shall Overcome”
- ❑ option 3: Advent bowl, tea light candles and candle lighter or battery-powered tea light candles

Dona Nobis Pacem

Dona nobis pacem, pacem.
Dona nobis pacem.

Focus on Your Teaching

“It’s not fair” is a familiar refrain in the ears of parents and teachers of tweens. Children this age have a strong sense of fair play and are quick to object to perceived injustice. They are also becoming more aware of what is happening in the wider world and understand that many people must endure desperately unfair circumstances. In the face of this, tweens may feel insignificant and powerless to effect change. Hope is a powerful tool to offer tweens. Encourage them to grasp hold of God’s promise as they look forward to a world ruled by justice and righteousness.

Transforming God, inspire me through Jeremiah’s prophecy and help me to claim the awesome hope you give. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, make an Advent bowl by placing a thick layer of reflective glass beads or floral stones (available at craft stores or florists) in a shallow bowl; nestle four votive candles into the stones. If open flames are not allowed, use battery-powered votives. Place a blue or purple cloth (see the sidebar) or place mat in the center of your learning space and place the Advent bowl on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, bring hymnals or songbooks with the song “We Shall Overcome.” The song can be found at bit.ly/1sde7TD.

Welcome tweens as they arrive. Gather with them around the Advent bowl. Explain the blue or purple color and welcome them to the church year season of Advent. During these weeks, Christians wait and hope for the completion of God’s kingdom and prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birthday.

Dim the lights and sing together “Dona Nobis Pacem” (Color Pack 32, [Singing the Feast](#)) as you light one candle. Comment that this candle is a reminder that Jesus, the Light of the World, is coming. Pray aloud:

God, be with us as wait and hope for the love that will be poured into the world through a baby in a manger. Help us to prepare our hearts for Christmas. Amen.

Extinguish the candle, if necessary.

Show Color Pack 1 and have tweens take a quiet moment to imagine what lies through this door. Discuss:

- ✠ What do you think is on the other side of this door?
- ✠ When have you wondered about what things lie ahead in your life?

Some churches use the color blue in worship during Advent as a symbol of hope. Some churches use purple, a color of royalty, to honor the coming of our king, Jesus. In your class, use the same color your church uses in worship.

✿ What would be good about knowing what is coming in the future? What might be scary?

Comment that during Advent we look back to the birth of Jesus as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. At the same time, we look forward to a time when the world finally will be the way God intends it to be. The Bible passage today gives a glimpse of what lies ahead.

EXPLORING

Explain that today's reading comes from the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Jeremiah). Ask for volunteers to read the information aloud. Invite tweens to tell what they find most interesting about Jeremiah. Ask:

✿ What do you think the prevailing mood was among God's people in exile?

Distribute Bibles and have tweens turn to Jeremiah 33:14–16. Ask a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Discuss:

✿ In what tone of voice do you imagine Jeremiah speaking these words? (Invite tweens to demonstrate.)

✿ What is God promising the people who are living in exile in Babylon?

✿ What do you think the people thought when they heard Jeremiah's message from God?

✿ Where do you find hope in Jeremiah's words?

Form two groups. Explain that you when you say a phrase, group one will repeat it and then group two will repeat it. Recite Jeremiah 33:15 phrase by phrase. Repeat this process several times, adding variety by changing your voice (whispering, shouting, dramatic). Finally, ask tweens to recite the entire verse in unison.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Imagine) and pens. Allow some quiet moments for tweens to work individually to complete it. Afterward, have tweens take turns telling how they completed the passage at the bottom of the page. Discuss:

✿ What things about a world ruled by God's justice are you looking forward to the most?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. New World Scenes** Tweens will imagine a world where justice prevails. Brainstorm ideas of what a world ruled perfectly by God's justice might look like. Set out a length of mural or bulletin board paper and markers. Ask tweens to work together to draw scenes of the world as God would have it be. Print the words of Jeremiah 33:15 somewhere on the mural. When they have finished, have tweens give the mural a title and display it for others in the church to enjoy.

EASY
PREP

Option: As tweens work on the mural, play "Dream God's Dream" by Brian Sirchio. It is available at bit.ly/1sdddX4.

- 2. We Shall Overcome** Tweens will express their hopes for God's world of justice through music. Distribute hymnals or songbooks and turn to "We Shall Overcome." Sing the tune for learners or play a recording. Sing the song together. Tell how this song became well known during the twentieth century when it was sung by people who were involved in the civil rights movement. They were protesting unfair treatment of African Americans and asking government leaders to pass laws that would make things fair for all people. After many years, progress was made. Discuss: How do you think singing this song gave hope to the protesters? Where is God's justice needed most in today's world? Work together to write a new stanza or two to reflect tweens' hopes and dreams. (For example, "there will be no wars" or "fear will disappear.") Sing the song again and include the new lyrics.
- 3. Candle Prayer** Tweens will pray for a world ruled by God's justice. Gather with tweens around the Advent bowl and give each one a tea light candle to hold. Invite conversation about what a world ruled according to God's plan might look like. Ask: What will be different? What will stay the same? Have tweens create a circle around the Advent bowl with the tea light candles. Dim the lights, if possible. Pass a candle lighter around the group and have each tween say one hope he or she has for the world this Advent season and then light his or her candle. Conclude by praying aloud: "God of love, work in us to help create a world where your justice reigns. Amen." After a few quiet moments, extinguish the candles.

CLOSING

Gather around the Advent bowl and light the first Advent candle, if necessary. Invite learners to tell what they will remember about Jeremiah's words. Show Color Pack 31 and review the lyrics to "Dance and Sing" (Color Pack 31, [Singing the Feast](#)). Sing the song as the group moves in a circle. Pray aloud:

O God, thank you for your never-ending love. May the time of your justice be now. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

Invite learners to clap twice as they say "Amen" at the end of the blessing:

Teacher: May the God of peace go with you this Advent season.

All: Amen (clap twice).

Tell learners you will pray for them this week and ask them to pray for you.

Dance and Sing

Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!

Refrain:

Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!

*Repeat stanza and refrain
one time
Repeat refrain three times*

Jeremiah

What is a prophet?

In Bible times, a prophet was a person called by God to deliver a message to God's people.

Who was Jeremiah?

Jeremiah was one of God's prophets. He lived about 600 years before Jesus was born. Jeremiah delivered God's message to the people of God who lived in Judah.

What was going on in Jeremiah's community?

Jeremiah's message was delivered during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah. This was a time of great upheaval because the rulers of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon were struggling to gain power in that part of the world.

The people of Judah were God's people, but they were not living in God's ways. They were worshiping other gods. They were not treating one another with fairness and kindness. Their leaders were not trusting in God.



What is the heart of Jeremiah's message?

Jeremiah warned God's people that if they did not change their ways, the nation of Judah would be conquered by a foreign army. The people did not change and Jeremiah's words came true. The Babylonian army marched in, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and forced many of God's people to go to Babylon.

Jeremiah had another message for God's people. It was a message of hope. The words in Jeremiah 33 were spoken to the people of Judah who had been captured and marched off to Babylon.

Imagine

We know that the world is not a perfect place. Many unfair things happen. For example:

-  Some companies force children to work long hours in dangerous conditions. The children are not allowed to play or go to school.
-  People die each day because they do not have enough food to eat, while other people have so much food that some of it spoils before they can eat it.
-  Families in many countries are forced to leave their homes and their cities because of war. They struggle to find a safe place to live.
-  Many youth and children are bullied and no one stands up for them.
-  Some factories release poisonous chemicals into the air, soil, and water.

Think about really unfair things that are happening in your community or the world. Describe one of these situations below: (You can use one of the above examples if you wish.)

Now imagine what this situation would look like if it were changed from unfair to fair. Write your description at the end of these words from Jeremiah 33:15–16, CEV:



I promise that the time will come when I will appoint a king from the family of David, a king who will be honest and rule with justice. In those days . . .
