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18 SATURDAY

SATURDAY, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent

Jer. 23:5-8  
Ps 72: 1, 12-13, 18-19  
Matt. 1:18-24

In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, there seemed to be little hope for the nation of Judah and its people: it was falling under the power of Babylon, betrayed by its own king and the officials who should have been its guardians. And the people endured exile. In this setting, Jeremiah prophesied that a far better king would come, a descendant of the great David, and he would rule wisely and restore the kingdom, bringing justice and right, security and peace. Such a message of hope for their country, their civil society, is surely what people everywhere look forward to; freedom from foreign control, from oppression and exploitation by fellow-countrymen. Being able freely to take part in civic and political life, being able to cast a vote in a fair and open election, having a voice in society, is a consoling hope, even if human political systems have human flaws, and changes and improvements don't happen immediately. We take Jeremiah's prophecy as referring to the coming of the Messiah, the Christ, and it gives us joy and hope in this Advent and Christmas season. And rightly so. But shouldn't we also reflect that Christmas is really a proclamation to the whole world that a time of justice and security and peace is actually coming, that there really *is* a Saviour born, not just for Christian believers or religious people but for everyone, for every nation. The coming Saviour is "God-with-us": Christmas is hope, and not just a sentimental, "feel-good" time for holiday and self-indulgence.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; may the whole earth be filled with His glory.