REVD. DR. D. J. AJITH KUMAR

The Hope of Christ’s Coming and Our Mission in Him

CNI · 29 November 2026

KEY VERSE
“By your endurance you will gain your souls.” (Luke 21:19)

READINGS
Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 85:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Luke 21:5-19

4th Sunday before Christmas

Advent 1 - CNI Day

Introduction

The season of Advent opens not merely with an anticipation of Christmas, but with a greater hope - the return of our Lord Jesus Christ as King and Judge. Today, as we begin the Christian liturgical year and observe the First Sunday of Advent, we also celebrate CNI Day, recalling the unity of the churches in North India that came together in mission, witness, and service. Advent reminds us that we are a pilgrim people, called to live with urgency, hope, and active mission. We are not passive waiters, but engaged witnesses of the kingdom of God. The four lectionary texts for today speak to a people living in waiting, yearning for God’s intervention, yet being invited to respond through faith, action, repentance, justice, and endurance. This message, though ancient, is urgent and relevant for the Church today.

The Church of North India (CNI) was inaugurated on November 29, 1970, in Nagpur, marking a historic moment in the ecumenical journey of Indian Christianity. Born out of a deep desire for visible unity among churches, the CNI brought together six distinct Protestant traditions: the Council of the Baptist Churches in Northern India, the Church of the Brethren in India, the Disciples of Christ, the Church of India (Anglican), the Methodist Church (British and Australian Conferences), and the United Church of Northern India (Presbyterian and Congregational). This union was the fruit of prolonged theological dialogues, prayerful discernment, and mutual commitment to the oneness of the Body of Christ. The formation of the CNI was not merely a structural merger but a spiritual witness to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21 – "that they may all be one." It symbolized hope for an indigenous, inclusive, and mission-oriented church, rooted in the Gospel and responsive to the needs of Indian society. Today, the CNI stands as a living testimony of unity in diversity, comprising 28 dioceses across India, engaged in worship, education, healthcare, social justice, and evangelism, continuing the mission of Christ in the Indian context. Let us reflect on four powerful truths drawn from the day’s readings.

1. A Promise Fulfilled, A Righteous Branch – Jeremiah 33:14–16

The prophetic voice of Jeremiah reminds the people of Judah in exile that God's covenant will not fail: "I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land." (v.15). In a time of deep national crisis and despair, God speaks hope—a

coming King from the line of David. This promise finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ. His rule is unlike the corrupt kingdoms of men. He is the King of justice and righteousness. This message is critical for today's world, where many live in fear, anxiety, and under oppressive systems. Christ's coming offers more than personal salvation - it inaugurates a kingdom of justice, peace, and transformation. On CNI Day, we remember that the Church of North India was formed to reflect this very vision: to be a united witness of righteousness and justice in a broken world. Unity in Christ is not simply organizational; it is a mission-centred unity. Let us then hold fast to the prophetic promise and live out our calling as agents of Christ's righteousness in our communities, institutions, and nation.

2. Reviving Our Land Through Mercy and Peace – Psalm 85:1–13

Psalm 85 beautifully captures the longing for national restoration. "You restored the fortunes of Jacob... Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." (vv.1, 10). This psalm is both a prayer of gratitude and a cry for deeper revival. It is a recognition that God's forgiveness and faithfulness lead to a renewed society. Verse 10 paints a profound image of the character of God's kingdom - where love and truth, righteousness and peace come together in perfect harmony. In the context of India's religious, political, and socio-economic tensions, the Church is called to be a reconciler. We must be a voice of mercy, a presence of peace, and a worker of justice. In our mission, we cannot separate spiritual revival from social responsibility. Advent calls us not to escapism, but to faithful engagement in healing the land through prayer, service, and advocacy for the marginalized. The CNI, with its commitment to health, education, and social justice, is a living witness to Psalm 85. But we must do more - there is still poverty, casteism, communalism, and injustice. The Church must pray and act for revival.

3. Children of the Day - Awake and Active - 1 Thess. 5:1–11

Paul reminds the believers in Thessalonica: "But you, beloved, are not in darkness... you are children of light and children of the day." (v.5). The apostle warns against complacency. The second coming of Christ will be sudden and decisive. But for the Church, it must not be a day of fear but of hope and readiness. Being children of the day means we are called to live lives of alertness, self-control, faith, and love. Paul writes: "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other." (v.11). This is our Advent calling. We are not to be sleepy spectators but active disciples who are awake to the signs of the times, encouraging others, and living with moral clarity and gospel urgency. Today, on CNI Day, we are reminded that the unity of the Church is not for its own sake but for mission. The world needs a Church that walks in the light, that dares to confront evil, that offers hope to the fearful, and that proclaims the Lordship of Christ boldly. Are we awake? Are we encouraging one another? Are we equipping the next generation to be salt and light?

4. Endurance in Mission and Witness – Luke 21:5–19

In the Gospel reading, Jesus prepares his disciples for a time of turmoil: "Nation will rise against nation... you will be hated... but not a hair of your head will perish." This passage is not meant to create panic but to produce endurance. Jesus is clear: the mission of the Church will be opposed. But God is with us. "By your endurance you will gain your souls." (v.19). The mission of Christ is not easy, but it is victorious. This passage teaches us that:

- Our mission is in hostile territory.

-

Our message will be opposed.

- But our King is with us.

Advent reminds us that we are to endure with joy, serve with courage, and witness with boldness. On this First Sunday of Advent and CNI Day, let us renew our calling. Let us remember the early missionaries who endured trials to bring the Gospel to India. Let us remember our Indian Christian reformers, theologians, teachers, and social workers who sacrificed for the kingdom. The CNI today is called not just to manage structures but to be a Spirit-filled, Christ-centred, mission-driven community that endures until Christ comes again.

Conclusion

As we begin Advent and celebrate the witness of the Church of North India, we are called to hope, to holiness, and to mission. Christ's coming is not just a past event or a future expectation - it is a present reality shaping how we live.

Let us be a Church:

- Grounded in God's promises (Jeremiah)
- Seeking mercy and peace for our land (Psalm)
- Awake and engaged in discipleship (Thessalonians)
- Courageous in witness and enduring in hope (Luke)

Let CNI Day not just be a remembrance but a recommitment - to the vision of a united, inclusive, missional church.

Prayer

O Sovereign Lord, our Hope and our King, We thank You for the promise of Your coming and the mission You have entrusted to Your Church. As we begin this Advent season, awaken us from spiritual slumber. Renew our hearts with the fire of Your love. May Your righteousness spring forth in our churches and communities. Grant us courage to endure, compassion to serve, and vision to proclaim Your kingdom. Bless the Church of North India as it celebrates its call to unity and mission. Make us faithful stewards of Your grace, bearing fruit for Your glory until the day of Your return. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.