

The First Sunday in Advent

November 29, 2020

St. Matthew 21:1-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

At first glance, it always appears odd and out of place, the Triumphal Entry on the first Sunday of Advent. We're supposed to be preparing for Christmas, not Good Friday. And yet, the Gospel gives focus to the entire season of Advent. Our Lord and King is coming, He is coming in the manger and He will come again on the last day of this world and this life. But, for whom and why is He coming this day?

Everyone wants a savior and the political theater of American politics will often lead you into believing the next savior of the nation will be found in the next election. The next savior will come and enter into glory as he processes down Pennsylvania Avenue on Inauguration Day. And depending on your place and position, your savior is the one that will rule and govern a climate, will construct peace among the races of mankind, or will pursue an end to world hunger. For others, your savior is the one that secures borders, protects the religious freedoms of all, and ensures all human life remains the precious gift that it truly is. Yet, seeing the world through these lenses, no matter the side you may be on is like riding a yo-yo. Every election becomes the most important, every election will save the republic, every new president is the one who was sent to save you - to save you from what? To save you from the other side. To save you from one another.

This is not to say Christians should avoid politics. There is a right responsibility in caring for our neighbor through the political process. But our savior will not be found in a man, it will not be found in the person who sits within the Oval Office. No the root of the world's problems is your failure to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. It is the failure to love your neighbor as yourself. It is sin.

This has been man's failure since the beginning of time, even as Adam and Eve did not keep the will of God within the Garden. And since man's fall into sin, the prophesy and promise of a coming king and savior was given throughout the generations and children of our first parents - to Seth, to Noah, to Abraham and Sarah, to Isaac and Rebekah, to Jacob, to Judah, down to David, down to Joseph, the husband of Mary and the adoptive father of Jesus. The world's history proclaimed this coming of Jesus, it

prepared for Him throughout all time, and here He is - processing into Jerusalem - riding - humbly on a donkey.

The crowds line the way and they see the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy uttered again in today's Gospel: *"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey. '"*(Matthew 21:5, NKJV) And yet, for whatever reason, Matthew does not provide the whole quotation of Zechariah's prophecy as he explains why the king comes, saying, *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation."* Did you catch that, He is just and comes with salvation to save you. He comes as we prayed in the collect today, to grant His *"Protection [that] we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by [His] mighty deliverance."*

This is why Jesus comes, to save *"The daughter of Zion,"* to save you his dear Church. Even while you may live in despair over the affairs of the world, or while the threatening perils of sin disorder your life, your King comes to you this day.

Martin Luther wrote: *"[This is] what 'your King is coming' means. 'You do not seek Him; He seeks you. You do not find Him; He finds you. For the preachers come from Him, not from you. Their preaching comes from Him, not from you. Your faith comes from Him, not from you. And everything that faith works in you comes from Him, not from you. Where He does not come, you remain outside; and where there is no Gospel, there is no God there, but only sin and perdition, no matter how free will can or wants to do, suffer, work, and live."*

So what does this mean? The true freedom you desire, the peace you crave, the salvation you need cannot and does not come from within you, nor can it come from the assemblies or institutions of this world. Rather, the deliverance and salvation you need comes from Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father, *"who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man."* He is a King like no other, He sets aside His throne and glory to enter the fray and tumult of this world, to enter your despair, and He does this for you.

So, how do you respond? You respond as those who lined the way into Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday as their King rode past, crying out, *"Hosanna in the Highest!"* Hosanna - Save us now! Be our Savior! These words are a weekly pattern of prayer every Sunday and will continue to be your prayer again this day. As you prepare to receive the Lord's flesh and blood, your voices join with choirs of angels, archangels, and the whole company of heaven in singing the Sanctus. Heaven and earth are joined once again. Those who now rest from the perils of this life sing - they sing with us as we continue

the Church's prayer and plea for forgiveness and our salvation - forgiveness and salvation that can only be received through faith in Christ Jesus.

While the days and lives of God's people are unknown. We are assured there will be days of despair, there will be days of trial and affliction, but you are not left without hope. As you journey through this Advent, remember this great news! Your King comes to you:

Your King comes to you at the end of the day, the end of your life, and the end of this world.

Your King comes to you with His grace and goodness, His Holy Word and Sacrament and His strength and blessing.

Your King comes to you when the night of affliction and temptation comes, the night of fear and despair, the night when death draws near.

Your King comes to you and all the faithful [to save you and give you His peace], both now and forever. +INJ+

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.*