

November 27, 2022
First Sunday in Advent
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Matthew 21:1–11 (Romans 13:11–14)

YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Matthew the 21st chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Happy New Year! Today is the beginning of the new Church Year, the First Sunday in Advent. The word **advent** is derived from the Latin word **adventus**, which means **coming** or **arrival**. In the Roman Empire, the word **adventus** referred to the **preparation** and **arrival** of the emperor or some other great dignitary with great ceremony and celebration. The world does not understand the Church’s Advent. They are too busy sprinting toward opening presents on Christmas morning. Advent is much more than prelude to Christmas. It is a **preparatory** time of repentance, anticipation, and joy, emphasizing the four **advents** or **comings** of Christ:

1. The Old Testament prophesy that foretells of the **coming** Messiah into the world.
2. God incarnate **coming** to earth in Bethlehem.
3. Christ **coming** to you in His Word, in the waters of Holy Baptism, and in His Holy Supper.
4. And finally, Christ’s **coming** again in glory on the Last Day.

Holy Scripture is much more than a history book. It is God’s story of salvation – for you. While just four weeks before Christmas it is easy to become focused on the Christ child in the manger, the sole reason for Jesus coming in the flesh on Christmas morning was to complete His work of Salvation. If He had not bled and died on the cross to save mankind from sin, death, and the devil, His birth in manger would only be an insignificant story in history. But God’s story of salvation is about the God/man Jesus, with real ancestors, a real birth, and real death, and a real resurrection – for you.

The genealogy of Jesus can be traced back over 2,000 years before His birth. His family tree includes several people who were thought to be the greatest kings ever. One of those was King David. Israel flourished in power and prosperity under King David. But it had nothing to do with what David did, but what God did **through** David. God came to him and made a covenant with him, saying:

“... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16)

... meaning that the Messiah would come from King David's lineage. About 400 years after God made His covenant with David, the prophet Zechariah gave Israel advanced notice how they would recognize the One who was to come and sit on David's throne saying:

“Behold, your king is coming to you... humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)

In our Gospel text this morning, St Matthew records that God kept His covenantal promise to David on Palm Sunday when the crowds in Jerusalem recognize Jesus as the Messiah and shouted:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 21:9)

But what we sometimes do not think much about is that this same One who was born in the manger, who some 33 years later entered Jerusalem, and was crucified less than a week later, is the One continues to come to you today and will come again in glory on the Last Day. Behold, your King is coming to you and He has given you advanced notice how to recognize Him and welcome Him.

There are certain people throughout history that can be recognized as important dignitaries just by how they dressed and traveled. As I mentioned earlier in the Roman Empire there was much ceremony and celebration at the arrival of the emperor. The Caesars wore extravagant linen togas draped over their shoulders and around their bodies while mounted on their mighty war horse. The common folk could always recognize the ruling class. Today the President of the United States rides in a fancy limousine with the presidential seal on the door while protected by a huge motorcade. Hollywood stars and professional athletes wear expensive clothes, ride in fancy vehicles, and have bodyguards so us common folk might covet their kingly status.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem the people did not recognize Him as their King by His fancy clothes, by His mighty war horse, or bodyguards. No. They trusted in God's promise given through Zechariah:

“Behold, your king is coming to you... humble and mounted on a donkey...”
(Zechariah 9:9)

The people did not need a king who was an arrogant tyrant or flashy dresser, but a humble servant. Because of the sin passed down from generation to generation from our ancestor Adam, all mankind, including you and me need the humble King who could pay the wages of God's wrath against all sin by humbling Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross to save sinners. (cf: Philippians 2:8)

Behold, your King is coming to you. Not in a presidential limousine, not on a mighty war horse or in fancy vehicle, and certainly without bodyguards. No, your King comes today as He came into Jerusalem, in humble means. He is the King who comes not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. (cf: Matthew 20:28) He comes because He knows you and I need a Savior. He comes to exchange His perfect life and death so that whoever believe in Him might pass through death into eternal life. (cf: John 5:24)

On New Year's Eve, many people will make New Year's resolutions, saying: "*Out with the old and in with the new.*" Today is the beginning of the new Church Year. When you look over the past Church Year, you likely can see things that you would like to cast out and rather forget, the things you have done and things that you have left undone. In our epistle lesson St Paul writes:

"... the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy." (Romans 13:11–13)

Christ's death and resurrection has paid the wages of sin and won salvation for all mankind. In Baptism God graciously granted you faith, salvation, and the Holy Spirit, declaring you righteous, for the sake of Christ. But it does not end at the font. Christ's coming again. The time is drawing near when He will take all who believe to Himself in heaven where we will fully experience eternal salvation. Each day, His second coming is one day closer. This present age of darkness is passing away so flee from sexual immorality and all your sin. You died to sin in Baptism. As St Paul says:

"How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:2)

Out with the old works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Paul says:

"¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14)

This means trust in your baptismal promises. Every morning make the sign of the ✠ holy cross, drown your old Adam in baptismal waters and arise a new creation, conforming your thoughts and deeds to living as a redeemed child of Christ. Just because you struggle with temptation and desires, you do not have to give in to them. Martin Luther once said:

"You cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head. But let them only fly and do not let them build nests in the hair of your head. Let them be thoughts and remain such; but do not let them become conclusions." (LW 6, 133)

And that is why your King comes to you. He comes clothed in humble words in the Absolution saying: "*Your sins are forgiven.*" He comes clothed in ordinary water with the invocation of the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to assure you that you will always be His child, no matter what happened last year, last week, or last hour. He comes clothed in humble bread and wine, which are His very body and blood, feeding you with life that lasts forever. He comes as the King you need, forgiving your sins and showing you grace upon grace. (cf: John 1:16)

The crowds gathered at Jerusalem and spreading out their garments and tree branches on the road, shouting:

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 21:9)

That one word, *hosanna*, says it all. It is a Hebrew expression that means: "**Save us, we implore thee.**" ("Hosanna," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 1000) The people welcomed their King as the only One who could save them from sin. They welcomed Him as one who comes in the name

of the Lord because He is not just representing the Lord, but he shares the very name of the Lord and is the very Lord of whom King David wrote:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)

How do we welcome Jesus as He comes to us in this new Church Year and on the Last Day? Just like the crowd of believers in Jerusalem welcome Jesus as Savior and Lord. The ***“Hosanna”*** and ***“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”*** are both from Psalm 118, and we sing them every week in the Sanctus during the Service of the Sacrament. Jesus, your humble King, comes to you today, and we citizens of the new Jerusalem welcome our King, shouting out our hosannas: ***“Save us, we implore thee,”*** knowing that in the Jesus whose body we eat and blood we drink we have the Savior and Lord who has served us and continues to serve us with exactly what we need: forgiveness, life, and salvation, forgiving your sins of drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, jealousy, and all the rest.

Your King is coming! It is not just history or old news, but it continues to be your current and ever present Good News of salvation. It was true when Jesus entered Jerusalem to die for your sins. It was true on the day when you were baptized and Jesus began to reign as the gracious King of your life. It is true today as you receive your King’s perfect righteousness at this altar in His body and blood. It will be true throughout this new Church Year as your King continues to come humbly and be truly present with His gifts of life and salvation. And it will be true on the Last Day, when you will see your King no longer coming in humility, but in great glory and face to face as King of kings and Lord of lords in His Kingdom which has no end. (cf: 1 Corinthians 13:12)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.