

Sermon – 11/28/21

Text – Luke 19:29-40

Theme – “Your King Comes”

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In the name of Jesus, our coming Savior and King. Amen.

The text for today -- the reading from St. Luke’s Gospel -- is the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Now, that may seem odd and out of place. After all, Palm Sunday took place the week before Good Friday and Easter. And those events took place in the spring, not late fall/early winter. Furthermore, Palm Sunday leads directly TO those events. So, why are we hearing this text now, in Advent, as we prepare for the birth of Christ?

Well, for centuries, the account of the Triumphal Entry has been the traditional lesson for the First Sunday in Advent because the words of the welcoming crowd are OUR words too, especially in this season: “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!*” And we share those words because of who this One is and what He will do for us: He is our **King**, who has come to save us (which is the literal meaning of that Hebrew word “hosanna”). Our King comes to us, humble and lowly, riding on a donkey. But He comes in order to save us, to free us from our enemies of sin and death and the devil.

Now, it may seem that the two seasons – Advent and Lent – are very different from one another. After all, Advent leads us to Christmas, the birth of our Savior, the most joyous of days; Lent, though, leads us to Good Friday, to the cross, to that most agonizing of days. But really there are great similarities and connections between these two seasons of the Church Year. Throughout history, the Christian Church has considered both Advent and Lent to be penitential

seasons: a time to reflect upon our sins which caused God to come down from heaven, to be born of Mary, to suffer and die in payment for our sins. We have to always keep in mind that the manger must lead to the cross.

So, in Advent we think of Jesus' birth as that little Baby of Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, born in a stable because there was no room for Him in the inn. But how did Mary come into Bethlehem? Riding on a donkey, with the little Lord Jesus in her womb. So, even then Jesus came, humble and riding on a donkey, coming to save His people, just as He came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He came meekly as an Infant, the Child of a young virgin engaged to a poor carpenter, the subject of much whispering and gossip. He came lowly, so much so that Joseph could not even find a room for Him at the inn, and thus He was laid to rest in a manger, attended by oxen and sheep and other farm animals. No one except those humble shepherds recognized His glory, His power, His might, His divinity. Wrapped in rough swaddling cloths – sort of like burlap – this King, this **Savior**, this God sleeps in the cold, in the filth, in the stink of a barn.

And yet, it is all very fitting. For this King has not come to be served, but rather *to serve*. He comes, not to be worshipped and adored and obeyed, but rather to do all that *for* us – worshipping and adoring and obeying His Father in heaven, keeping the Law and commandments for us every day of His life here on earth. This King has come to take the place of His sinful, rebellious subjects – in His life and in His death. He has come to do for us what we could never do for ourselves, paying the price required to set us free from sin/death/devil. On the cross, He sheds His blood for us, dying so that we might live. Such is the King who

comes on that donkey, riding in Mary's womb; such is the King who comes on that donkey into Jerusalem over a road covered with palm branches and coats.

The coldness of our fallen world, the filth of our sin, the stink of our spiritual corruption He has come to endure – and to change. He comes to liberate us from Satan's tyranny and oppression and slavery. He comes to make us His brothers and sisters, to make us the very children of God, to restore us to our rightful place in God's order, as His beloved heirs who rule over all creation with their loving Father. (pause)

When little Jesus came that cold night in Bethlehem, born to Mary out in a stable, with no pillow on which to lay His head, no blankets to warm Him, no nurse except the barnyard animals, no visitors but the shepherds – when He came that night so long ago, the world did not care. Who welcomed Him, who wanted Him? Why, the whole town of Bethlehem shut its doors against Him!

And later, when the Wise Men come and tell King Herod and the Jewish leaders and high priests that they have come to worship the new-born King of the Jews, do any of *them* go out to find Him, to meet Him, to adore Him? No, it is only those bedraggled and tired and saddle-sore Wise Men from the East who go out to Him, with their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. King Herod's response is to plot Baby Jesus' death. The response of the priests and Pharisees is even worse – for they ignore Him altogether. And the people of Jerusalem, we are told, are afraid at what this all means and so they stay at home, trembling.

Yet here is the Son of God, the Savior of the Nations, and the King of the Jews. It is only the meek and lowly and outcast who ever seem to see and understand, who ever welcome and embrace Him. For instance, the shepherds -- out in the hills keeping watch over their sheep,

unable to follow the niceties and fine points of the Pharisees' man-made rules -- *they* receive the angels' words with great joy. They run to see their King, their Savior, and their God. They rejoice that He has come to set them free, to obey the Law that they cannot, and thus to give them eternal life. And then, after they have seen Him lying in that humble manger (even though He is God in the flesh), they go and tell everyone they meet what they have heard and seen, who this Little King is and what He has come to do.

And those Wise Men, *they* come from far away, just to adore Him. They are not Jews. And yet they drop everything when they see His star in the sky – because they know exactly what it means: *their* Savior has come – indeed, He has come, not just for the Jews, but for all people. He comes to set all people free from their burden of sin. He comes to open heaven to all who believe: Jew and Gentile alike. And so they come from hundreds of miles, just to get a glimpse of Him. They bring Him their best: gold, for a King; frankincense, for a Priest; myrrh, to anoint for burial the One who has come to die, to be a Sacrifice for the world.

And in our lesson today from Palm Sunday, it is the Jewish crowd – not the religious leaders, not the priests, not the Pharisees, not the scribes – but the common, everyday sinners who welcome Jesus, who recognize Him to be sent from God. They cry out to Him: “Hosanna!” They look for Him to save them, to deliver them. They line the streets where He rides, they cover the road with their clothes and with palm branches, and they sing His praises at the top of their lungs.

Yet how quickly even *that* changed, for Jesus was not the sort of King they imagined or wanted. They could not conceive of a King whose kingdom was not of this world, a King who would rule by suffering and dying, a King who surrenders Himself for His people. Instead they

wanted a King who would give them riches and power and freedom now. And so it was, when Jesus made clear that He was not that kind of King, that they rejected Him. A mere five days later Jesus is betrayed and deserted by His disciples, He is falsely accused of crime and blasphemy, He is put on trial and beaten, He is sentenced to death, He is scourged and mocked and spit upon, and then He is nailed to a cross to die.

On Good Friday, what is left of that huge crowd that sang their Palm Sunday “Hosannas”? They are all gone. And so, the Jesus of Good Friday is alone, with just a few standing at the foot of His rough wooden cross to watch Him die, and it is only a Roman soldier and a Jewish criminal who still acknowledge Him as King; in the same way, the Jesus of Christmas is alone in that rough wooden manger, with only a few outcast shepherds and barnyard animals to receive Him. And yet it is there – on that cross – that we see Jesus most clearly as our King, as our Savior, as the One who has come to save us. For there He rules for His people, taking their sins onto Himself, giving Himself over to death and hell in order to set them free. (pause)

This King -- born in that Bethlehem stable and not a palace; crowned with thorns and not gold; enthroned on a cross and not a cushioned chair – this King has come to deliver us, to save us, just as that crowd begged Him to do that Palm Sunday. That little Child, lying in Bethlehem’s manger, grew to live the perfect life of obedience to all God’s commandments – and now He gives *you* credit for that righteousness. That Son of Mary -- who slept in the dirt and stench of a barn -- died on a bloody, filthy cross and slept in the cold dank of a tomb; to free you from sin and its curse of death, both physical and spiritual. The One worshipped and adored by shepherds and Wise Men as the very Son of God, rose again on Easter to prove that He truly

is the Son of God and that He has conquered our foes, that He has defeated the devil, that He does give us the victory. (pause)

Yes, it is true that there are many threads which connect Advent and Lent. We can see why the Church has chosen this Palm Sunday lesson for us to hear **now**, as we embark on another Advent season. Like those Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem, we also lift our voices in praise of our coming King. We make ready to welcome Him who comes in the name of the Lord, knowing that this tiny King whose birth we celebrate at Christmas has come for just one purpose: to make atonement for all our sins, to reconcile us with our heavenly Father, to win our forgiveness and life even at the cost of His own.

So it is that now, in this season of Advent, we join the crowds of Palm Sunday, singing our hosannas and praises. We who are born again by the Holy Spirit -- the One who gives us faith in Jesus as our Savior – cry out in welcome: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And so we welcome You, Lord Jesus, our Savior and King. Amen.

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

OS – Offertory/Offering

FE – Offertory/Offering