



THE LORD COMES, AGAIN!

First Sunday in Advent

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Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Can you remember when doctors made house calls? House calls are very rare today. Someone figured out that a doctor can see so many more people by staying in one place and having the patients come to him. The doctor's office also has a great deal of medical equipment that would be difficult, if not impossible, to haul from house to house. So, these days, we go to the doctor. He doesn't typically come to us.

That's the way it is with many people. We go to see them. They rarely come to see us. We go to work. The work very rarely comes to us. We go to the lawyer. The lawyer rarely comes to us. We go to the banker. The banker rarely comes to us. When the candidate wants our vote, he comes to us. After the election, we go to him. When a child really misbehaves in school, it's a trip to the principal's office. The principal doesn't normally come to the student's locker. But if he does, well that's another matter. It's the way of the world for the inferior to come to the superior - for the small to come to the great - for the subjects to come to the King.

So, right here at the beginning of the church year, we find out that the true God is different. He - the most superior being in all the universe, comes to us. In the spiritual world of the true God, the great comes to the small - the king comes to His subjects.

In today's Gospel we find God straddling a donkey's colt. The King humbles Himself to come to His subjects. It's a humble situation, but it's also a fulfilling of prophecy. In today's Introit, we chanted that prophecy from Zechariah 9. **Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.** He is coming, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Jesus, the king of everything, comes to Jerusalem riding in humility on a borrowed beast of burden.

As the true unity of God and man came to Jerusalem on a donkey, the Passover pilgrims praised Him. **"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"** We don't know all the different reasons these Passover Pilgrims had for praising Jesus as the one who comes to save. Neither the Bible nor other historical records tells us their motives. No doubt some expected Jesus to come and start a grass roots movement against the Roman tyranny. Others, perhaps, had recently seen Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha; coming out from the tomb four days after he died and expected the Messiah to come and start a medical

revolution. Still others were from Galilee and expected Jesus to come and be a great prophet and perhaps make Nazareth a respectable town once again.

Few, if any, of these pilgrims expected Jesus to come and do what He actually did (†). Few, if any, on that road to Jerusalem expected their Messiah to be the victim of false arrest, corrupt courts, and a death based on political expediency instead of justice. Victory by death was the last thing that most, if not all of these Passover pilgrims expected.

During Advent, we especially think about how Jesus comes - how He first came - how He comes now - and how He will come again on the last day. During this season of Advent - during this season when we prepare for Jesus to come - what do you expect Him to come and to do? Are you looking for someone to cure the ills of society? Are you looking for someone to make you healthy, wealthy, and wise? Are you looking for someone who will make you a better you? What are you looking for when the Messiah comes?

One need only look to TV or book stores for the things that the world wants the Messiah to come and do. Books with such titles like: *7 Keys to Improving Your Life Every Day; Lead Like Jesus; King Solomon's Secrets to Success, Wealth, and Happiness*; and many more. Preachers on TV tell us that Jesus wants to come and make us rich, happy, and healthy right now. Jesus is very popular in the world when He comes and provides all kinds of personal, health and wealth. This world cheers the Jesus who can come and solve all sorts of marriage problems and gives emotional stability. The world would be more than happy to have a parade for that kind of Jesus.

The problem with this is that somebody forgot to tell Jesus this was His job. Those expectations of Jesus are not in the Scriptures. The Jesus of the Bible kept saying things like, John 16:33 ***"In this world you will have tribulation"***. John 12:25 ***"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life"***. Luke 14:27 ***"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple"***. John 15:19 ***"Because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*** John 15:20 ***"If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."*** Jesus comes for a different reason than what the world expects.

The Jerusalem Passover pilgrims hailed Jesus as Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ. When they proclaimed Jesus as Messiah, they proclaimed Him as the one anointed to be their prophet, priest, and king. Little did they know that their Messiah's throne would be the cross (†). In the cross, Jesus comes as the Son of David and reveals the name of the Lord. Not in heaven, but in the confinement of the cross do we find the highest heavens in which we sing, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!" In the cross we find the truest, the purest revelation of God and the reason that He comes.

The world still wants to divert us from the true meaning of the coming of the Messiah. Every year Christmas is pushed forward on our calendars, shopping starts earlier and earlier. Marketing has come into Christmas. Many merchants hope Jesus comes and transforms their bottom line from the color red representing loss to the black representing profit. And it all starts on Black Friday. Marketing is not interested in the Jesus who came and died on the cross or the beginning the Advent Season.

The world's celebration of Christmas does us no favors. It separates Lent and the account of Jesus' suffering from the story of His birth. There's no resonance between the infant Jesus in the manger and the Jesus of the cross. The Jesus of Calvary bears no resemblance to the Child of

Bethlehem. The world loves to disconnect the baby Jesus in the manger from Jesus the God-Man who died on the cross. The world would have us believe that God came to the manger just because humanity is basically good and lovable. Let me assure you, the day Jesus was born His death on the cross was already marked on the calendar.

Let me be clear our celebration of the Lord's coming has nothing to do with what the world does. The world overcomes its darkness with artificial lights and sings, *"May all your Christmases be bright."* Don't get me wrong, I love that song and singing it. But let's not forget that we are sitting in the darkness of sin and in the shadow of death whose only hope is in the light that God provides in Jesus Christ. We are waiting in the darkest night of sin for the dawn of our salvation in Jesus Christ. We are the ones who want God to come and rescue us from our own sin. We are the ones who pray, *"Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance."* We are the ones who sing, *"Savior of the nations, come"*

Every year, pilgrims journey to Jerusalem and try to recreate the events of today's gospel. Of course many of the details are lost to history and cannot be reconstructed. Jesus doesn't come as He once did, but He now comes in other ways. He comes in His body and blood, truly locally present. In the Lord's Supper Jesus is the conquering King. He defeats sin, death and the devil through His means of grace. He comes as the Son of David and the Son of God, as God and man, as our creator and yet our brother, as our servant and yet our king. He comes in the bread and wine of the sacrament. He comes among us in our time and space. As He comes to us in bread and wine we join the Passover pilgrims and sing, ***"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest."*** In that mystical moment, God joins us with the hosts of heaven as we all participate in this heavenly meal that comes to us here on earth.

Advent is not Christmas. During Advent we remember the many ways that God comes to us. We remember how He came in the flesh. We remember how He comes in Word and Sacrament. We remember how He will come in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Of all the ways God comes to us, only the last one remains to be fulfilled. God prepares us for His last coming by giving us the faith that believes that that little babe lying in the manger is really is the Son of God. That He is the true Master and creator of the Universe taking on a human nature. That the pain and suffering of His birth is hardly comparable to the perfect life that He will live for you and me and then be rewarded with the pain and suffering of the cross. His death and His resurrection open the door of salvation for all who believe. So that, when He comes that one last time, we shall depart this world of sorrows and live with Him in everlasting joy.

All this is for those who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. So believe and be saved for Jesus died for you! And He's coming back for you. Even so, we boldly pray Come Lord Jesus, Come!

In Jesus name, Amen and Amen!

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