

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Advent 1C
November 28, 2021
Luke 19:28-40

Preparation and Praise for the Coming King

As [Jesus] was drawing near- already on the way down the Mount of Olives- the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:37-38 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, our King who comes to save us.

The First Sunday in Advent begins the hardest season of the Church Year. It's hard because we want to jump right to Christmas – without waiting, without preparing. We want the decorations, the music, even the food of Christmas without Advent waiting and preparation and, of course, repentance. We want to start celebrating Christmas now even though it's still over three weeks away. By the time the Christmas season gets here, we're tired of it. So, let's observe Advent first. Then we'll be ready to celebrate Christmas for almost two weeks, and oh, what a celebration it will be!

Now if today's Gospel reading seems odd for the First Sunday in Advent, it's because we expect it for another occasion. And yet, this Gospel reading of Jesus going up to Jerusalem sets the tone for the whole year to come because the whole church year points to, focuses on, revolves around, and then flows out of, Jesus going to Jerusalem for Good Friday and Easter. That is the central focus of the church year, even as it is the central focus of the Christian faith itself, namely, Jesus' suffering and dying and rising again for us in triumph over sin, death, and the devil. What is central to our faith—and central to our salvation—is mirrored in and taught by the Christian church year. The First Sunday in Advent gets us off to a good start by pointing us in that direction.

Jesus was preparing to go to the cross for our salvation. He instructed some disciples, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'"

A colt on which no one has ever yet sat. In other words, one that God, in His providence, had set apart for this very special purpose: to carry the Creator of the universe, come in the flesh, as He rides into Jerusalem to redeem a world of sinners. A lowly beast of burden given the greatest honor of all: to carry the One who would bear the burden of our sins. God had prepared and provided and set apart this one donkey colt to carry out this special assignment.

And the disciples were to carry out their preparations by going and finding that colt, because “the Lord has need of it.”

Thus, we too prepare for the coming of the King. And the most important preparation we will do this Advent season is not the lighting of candles or the hanging of greens or the putting up of Christmas trees or other decorations. The most important Advent preparation we can do is to prepare our hearts to receive our King. Repentance, penitential preparation for our coming King, is a major theme of the Advent season. We are called during Advent to repent, to turn away from our sins, to mourn our sinfulness, and to look to the Lord for cleansing and forgiveness.

And as we repent, as we prepare the way of the Lord, we submit everything to Him, whatever He wants to use. Whether it’s a donkey’s colt or our heart or our tongue, if the Lord wants to use it, we set it apart for His own purpose. “Why,” you ask? Because the Lord has need of it. And while we need everything from Him, if the Lord wants to use the gifts He has already given us, our intellect, our income, our witness, our willing service for the good of His church or the good of our neighbor, then we humbly offer whatever He can use for His purpose, and we simply say, “The Lord has need of it.”

And while we prepare for our coming King, we also praise Him. That is also only fitting. “It is meet and right so to do.” Indeed, listen to the praises that greeted our Lord when He rode into Jerusalem: The whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

During Advent we join with that multitude of disciples in praising God and blessing the King who comes in His name. Praise adorns this Advent season because we know who’s coming and what He’s coming to do. Is it possible to combine careful preparation with joyful praise? Of course! That’s the balance we strike this season. With repentant joy we receive our Savior and the Salvation He accomplished for us.

The crowds praised God for all the mighty works they had seen. They had seen Jesus heal the sick, deliver the oppressed, forgive sins, feed the multitudes, befriend the outcast, and raise the dead. These mighty works we also see with the eyes of faith. We see what lies in store for us when our Lord comes again and raises our mortal bodies and restores this fallen creation and gives us perfect healing and soundness in the age to come. That’s what we’re waiting for. That’s what our Lord’s first coming guarantees. So, we welcome and look forward to His coming like the multitudes did: by rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice.

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” That’s Jesus! He’s our King. He reigns over us in His kingdom of grace even now, and He will reign over us in His kingdom of glory, which will have no end. Jesus is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. He comes with God’s full authority to do what He does, for He is the very Son of God, come in the flesh. He comes from the Father, full of grace and truth. We praise and bless this King as He comes to us.

“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” We sing this in our service because that is exactly what is happening here today. Jesus is coming to us today in this blessed Sacrament, bringing us salvation and all His gifts here with His Body and His Blood.

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” That’s what this King’s coming literally brings about: Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Peace with God once more is made, because Christ Himself is our peace. He established this peace between God and man, peace between heaven and earth, when He went to the cross and paid the debt for our sins. He took the wrath of God that we deserved upon Himself. Now the strife is o’er, the battle done. Peace now reigns in heaven: God is at peace with us because of what Christ has done.

And this in turn brings glory to God for what He has accomplished in sending the Savior: “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” The ranks of angels lead the chorus of praise in the heavenlies. We join with them in their worship. “Glory in the highest!” The crowds echo what the angels sang at Jesus’ birth: “Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Shall we not join them with our own loud voice of praise? Of course, we will! Because, I tell you, if we were to remain silent, the very stones would cry out. The angels’ song at Christmas, the shouts of the multitude at the triumphal entry—their voices blend with our voices, as together with one voice we praise the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.

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

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