

Ad Te Levavi  
28 November, Anno Domini 2021  
St. Matthew 21:1-9  
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

In Eden, after having spurned the Word of God and enslaved themselves and all humanity to death, Adam and Eve were cast out of paradise and the place of God's immediate presence. They could not return to the Tree of Life and the place where they once walked with God. They were now forced to realize the bitter earthly consequences of their rebellion - the pains of child bearing and the cursed ground which would only yield its fruit under duress and with great toil, blood, sweat, and eventually death. They now suffered fear and dread and weakness. Their children and grandchildren would rise against one another in hatred and murder. Their bodies would suffer pain and decay. Their eye sight would grow dim. Their joints would ache. Diseases of mind and body would bring them to their graves. Adam and Eve would have to watch in horror as their rebellion bore its terrible fruit and people turned away in hatred from the true and living God who had created all things.

But there remained the great promise. God had not left us without hope. He would come just as He had promised. He would send the Messiah who would crush the ancient serpent's head. The Messiah would save us from death and His Blood would protect us on the Day of Judgment. He would not simply abandon us to death. He is, after all, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. His desire has and always will be that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Yes, thanks be God, there was still the promise. Without that promise man had nothing, has nothing.

Look around. Peer into your own family. Peer into your own heart. See what awaits when the promise is not there, when there is no hope of redemption, no desire for salvation. Every violent and perverted fantasy now sells the most albums and gets the most downloads. Godly men and women, husbands and wives, and marriages are hated and denigrated. Children are seen as nothing more than burdens. Selfish convenience is grounds for murdering young and old alike. Pure and utter darkness is all you will find no matter how you try to gloss over it. Idolatry, covetousness, drunkenness, addictions, lovelessness, all manner of sexual immorality, laziness, greed, anger, jealousy, cold hearts hardened to the Word of God. Sin has wrought utter devastation at every level of our existence - no created

thing is spared the suffering. Our lovelessness is our declaration of independence from the God who created us. And we would most certainly deserve for Him to abandon us to death as we reach out time and again in utter contempt for His Word.

And what will you do to fix it? What is within your power to change so that you no longer deserve God's unvarnished wrath and judgment? What could you possibly offer that would gain you access into the presence of God where there is light and joy and life? Of course, the answer is absolutely nothing. No matter how hard we try, the best of our works are still covered in sin. Of ourselves and our own will we remain now and forever separated from God. We cannot ever hope to reach Him by either our moral uprightness or our spiritual exercises. Attempting to do so only ends in utter failure and drives us to despair. St. Paul's words smash down like a hammer - "love does no wrong to a neighbor". No wrong. None. Not to your spouse, your children, the homeless man under the bridge, the person sitting in the Oval Office, the lady down the street, or the person at work trying to make your life miserable.

The truth of the matter is that this season of Advent is not a season of preparation for Christmas. We are not preparing for the birth of Jesus. That has already taken place. We are preparing, continually, for our Lord's second Advent, the day of judgment, the day when Jesus comes with clouds descending to the blast of the trumpet. We are preparing so that when the cry goes up at midnight that the Bridegroom has arrived we are not caught without oil and shut out of the wedding feast. Jesus has already been born and has already died to make atonement for your sins. He has already risen from the dead and ascended to the Father. The promise of Eden has been fulfilled - our sin and rebellion have been forgiven, the Law's guilty verdict against us has been laid on the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Satan's head has been crushed and the accuser now has nothing left to accuse you of. Your sin, all of it, belongs to Jesus, your brother in your flesh who has clothed in Holy Baptism with the robe of His own righteousness.

Because of Jesus' first Advent, we now have redemption and look forward to the day when what belongs to us now by faith will be fully known. The Lord Jesus is your righteousness and it is by faith in Him alone, Him who came once, born of the Virgin Mary, that we wait with eager expectation for Him to come again this time not humbly, not on a donkey, not to suffer and die. What we wait for now is for Jesus to return in glory before all the nations, just as He promised, and to take us

away from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. Thus your prayers arise to God “Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly and save us!”

And that is exactly what He does. He comes - not on a donkey nor on clouds. Rather, in this time of waiting He comes, Body and Blood, veiled under bread and wine to deliver to you every blessing of His sinless life, His sacrificial death, and His justifying resurrection from the dead. He comes in the Office of the Holy Ministry through which His absolution is bestowed upon all who confess their sins and seek His mercy. He comes in Holy Scripture and in the brotherly consolation of the saints. He comes bringing righteousness and salvation from the throne of His cross to give to poor sinners everywhere.

He does not come according to the desires of our heart in the ways and places and times we desire. He comes wherever the Gospel is rightly preached and the Sacraments administered according to His institution. He comes exactly as He has promised He would. He comes right into the midst of sinners, not to destroy but to save. We need the Light of Light to come and stand in our midst to cast out the darkness that blinds and entangles us. And He does. He comes to us precisely because we cannot come to Him! In a profound mystery, God saved those us who didn't even want to be saved. Blessed is He who comes in the name of Lord, bringing righteousness and salvation to us. Blessed be our true and only King who did not come to deal with according to our sin, but according to His steadfast love and faithfulness. Behold, oh children of God, oh frightened and timid consciences, how your King came not in wrath or in indignation but in humility to save such miserable and wicked servants.

May our gracious Lord, stir up in each of us a fervent and constant desire to receive Him who came, Him who comes, and Him who will come again so that when He comes we are not found unprepared. Rather by His coming now in Word and Sacrament, may we be found eagerly awaiting His arrival with lamps burning brightly, with prayers and hymns of praise on our lips, and having put on the Lord, our righteousness who has washed and redeemed us, cleansing us from sin and rescuing us from death. In Him, on that Last Day, we will not be put to shame. Instead, we will be revealed as the true sons of the Most High God in the presence of all peoples and taken at last to our eternal home.

In the Name of +Jesus.

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord.