

Advent 1C (11/29/09 – *Persistent Preparation to Celebrate Christ's Coming*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Advent. The Coming of Our Savior. That is the general theme for this *Season of Advent* as we begin the new Church Year. And today on this *First Sunday in Advent* we move from last Sunday's theme of *Watchful Waiting for Christ's Coming* to *Persistent Preparation to Celebrate Christ's Coming*. *Advent* is a season of preparation – not unlike the season of *Lent* in many ways ... but less rigorous. That is why we use the purple paraments during *Advent* ... the purple of repentance ... since repentance is **always** an element of the proper preparation for our Lord's Advent – whether it be remembering His Coming in the Flesh at *Christmas* ... anticipating His Coming in Glory on the Last Day ... or receiving His continuous, present day Coming in Grace by the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament.

In fact, repentance is the key element – along with faith ... which is more important still. Repentance is key in being properly prepared to celebrate Christ's Coming. For it is only when we own our sin – when we recognize our sin ... and our sinfulness – that our hearts and minds and souls are prepared – indeed, made to hunger and thirst and longingly yearn for – what Christ came and continues to come to give us; namely, His forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is only when we realize our own **un**righteousness that we long for that Righteous Branch – Who came from the line of King David to be *The LORD our Righteousness* [JER 33.16] – to work His righteousness in us. And even when the thought of the Last Day Coming of our Lord in great power and glory to *execute* one final *justice and righteousness* rightly causes fear in our hearts – since we know that we have been summarily **un**just in our faith and our dealings with others – even then, through God-given repentance and faith, our fear is turned to anticipation ... because God declares us righteous by His grace for the sake of what Christ our Savior did at His First Coming.

There is no better picture of our Lord's three-fold Coming to us than His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on that Sunday before His passion – as we have it in our *Holy Gospel* for the day [LK 19.28-40]! Here we have all

rolled into one scene every aspect of our Savior's Advent. We hear the words spoken in fulfillment of the promise of the Coming of the Messiah – ***Blessed is the King Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*** [LK 19.38] Perhaps it doesn't seem like much to our ear, but to the ears of the Lord's closest disciples would hear these words and recall how He Himself said they would be spoken of Him at His return to Jerusalem – just as He foretold in LUKE 13 [verses 34-35] when He lamented:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see Me until you say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!"

And to the ears of a first century Jew it would hearken all the way back to this Word of God from PSALM 118 [verses 20-29]:

²⁰ This is the Gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. ²¹ I thank You that You have answered me and have become my Salvation. ²² The Stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ²⁶ Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷ The LORD is God, and He has made His Light to shine upon us. Bind the Festal Sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar! ²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to You; You are my God; I will extol You. ²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!

We see in Jesus' *Triumphal Entry*, then, the purpose for His Coming in the Flesh – that He might be the ***Festal Sacrifice*** bound to the Altar of the Cross to atone for your sins and my sins and the sins of the whole world. That is why the Son of God is born as an Infant in Bethlehem – to be a ***Light***

to shine upon Israel and to lighten the Gentiles (as Simeon would say when he beheld the Infant Christ in the Temple) ... to be the *Cornerstone* upon which our faith is founded ... to bring about the *Salvation* of the world ... and to be the *Gate* through which we enter into the kingdom of God and heaven. That is why the God-Man enters Jerusalem. And just as Christ enters His City in great humility – riding on a beast of burden instead of a great and mighty steed of war – so He entered this world when first He came ... in great humility ... being born and laid in a manger ... where Joseph and Mary’s own donkey would have been stabled. Your God goes out just as He first came into this world – humble ... having come in meekness to bear the sins of the world on His own shoulders. Your God has made Himself a “beast of burden” for **your** sake ... that you might not bear the burden of your sin and death and hell.

But this humble entry also portrays our Savior’s continuous Coming in Grace – also here and now in this place. Just as our Lord once commanded His disciples to go as He directed ... and promised that they would find things just as He said – and they did – so today Jesus has told His disciples ... us ... His Church just to go as He commands and promises that we will find things just as He has said. Like a donkey and its colt – such a humble ... even crude ... means of conveyance for the Son of God – so also the Means of God’s Grace ... the Word and the Sacraments ... appear to be humble ... even crude. Why should such simple, down-to-earth means convey the very forgiveness worked by the Savior at His First Coming? Surely there is something akin to the great and noble steed that God could use today to bring us such costly – infinite precious – gifts! Why the preaching – this man called “Pastor” is nothing but a crude, beast of burden ... with a covering of cloaks?! Surely God could use something much more fitting for Himself – someone less sinful ... more elegant ... angels maybe! But as God says in HEBREWS:

Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have

crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.” [HEB 2.5-7]

Surely God could use something more extravagant than everyday water, bread, and wine! But Christ has shown us the way it is in the Kingdom of God’s Grace. For now it is humble ... seemingly inglorious – though filled with true glory. For now it is despised by the world – ***Teacher, rebuke Your disciples*** [LK 19.39] – but believers will ever rejoice and be glad in the Lord ... give thanks to and extol Him. And ***if these were silent, the very stones would cry out*** [19.40]. And even now, just as Christ entered Jerusalem to go to the Cross ... so is our life in the Church cruciform. Our lives are shaped by and guided by the Cross of our Lord. But as we heard just a few Sundays ago on ***The Feast of All Saints: Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*** [1JN 3.2]

And finally, just as Christ’s entry into Jerusalem was the fulfillment of His Own words – a reminder that they had forsaken Him Who came to embrace them in loving protection – so will our Lord’s Second and Final Coming be to all those who have rejected Him on earth. His heart toward them has not changed. He still says: ***How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*** [LK 13.34b] But on that Last Day His words to those who reject Him and do not believe in Him will be final: ***Behold, your house is forsaken*** [LK 13.35a]. For now He is still Coming in Grace – seeking to save the lost ... speaking His gracious Word through us. For now He comes to you that He ***may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father*** so that you are prepared for ***the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints*** [1TH 3.13]. For now ***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*** [ZECH 9.9] And now, as we continue our ***Persistent Preparation to Celebrate Christ’s Coming*** ... we prepare to celebrate the foretaste of the Feast to come in the ***LORD’S SUPPER.***

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]