

Gaudete
St. Matthew 11:2-10
December 16th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Are You the Coming One?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. John the Baptist wants everyone to hear the question that he posed to our Lord + Jesus Christ: *“Are You the coming one?”* The season of Advent has often been called St. John the Baptist’s season, for he is the one who prepared the way for the Messiah—our Lord + Jesus. Advent is all about preparation for our Lord’s coming. Certainly, we prepare for our Lord’s Incarnate birth on Christmas, but we are also preparing our hearts and minds for our spiritual journey through this life. And, we are preparing for the Last Day, when our Lord + Jesus will call us to our eternal home in Heaven. We Christians prepare by hearing the Word of the Lord. We prepare by listening to the promises that our Lord has proclaimed through His prophets throughout holy Scripture.

The true preparation during Advent is done only through our participation in the means of grace. There the Holy Ghost works on our hearts and minds through the Word of God to create and sustain faith in us. We are only truly prepared for our Lord’s coming, when we hear our Lord God’s Word and believe His promises and heed His warnings. To truly prepare for the coming of Christmas our ears must be opened to hear what our Lord + Jesus has done for us.

Unfortunately, this is not the case with many people today; even many Christians. Just think about your own “preparations” for this coming Christmas. What has been your focus? Has it been about planning meals and buying and wrapping gifts? Has it been about decorating your house and tree for Christmas? Has this become the main focus? Now, there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these things. Doing these things are not a sin. However, if you spend more time worrying about and doing these things than spending time in reading and studying God’s Word and in prayer during this time, then you have failed.

The devil, the world and our sinful flesh wants to destroy our faith so much, that we should never cease preparing for the battles trial and temptation that these enemies of ours plague us with daily. As Dr. Luther wrote in the preface to the Large Catechism: we are such “louts and scimps” for not daily and continuously taking up our weapons of defense against our spiritual enemies. We must ever be on guard against the attacks of Satan and the world; even our own hearts. The weapons that we have to combat our enemies is the Word of God, which teaches us all that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. These are great and powerful weapons! As we sing in the well-known Luther hymn, “One little word can fell him.” When temptation and trial attack us, our defense is and always will be the Word of God;

it will always be the promises of our Lord God to defeat our enemies on our behalf. Therefore, when we neglect God's Word; when we spend more time in useless trappings during this time of preparation for Christmas, we do ourselves a great disservice.

Spend more time in the Word of God. Prepare for our Lord's coming by preparing your heart to hear His Word and receive Him in your heart through faith. Through the means of grace, the Holy Ghost desires to prepare you for your daily battles with temptation to sin. If you struggle in this life with sin, as we all do, whether we want to admit to ourselves or not, then your defense is readily available to you: The Word of God, and constant reflection and prayer to God about that Word of God. The Church even helps you during this penitential time of preparation, by offering more times to gather as a body of Christ and hear and receive His Word.

This is one of the reasons why the season of Advent has been linked to the preaching of St. John the Baptist, for his whole purpose was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. He was to point the people of Israel to the Lord + Jesus—the Messiah. As we will hear on Wednesday and next Sunday, St. John the Baptist has been doing just that since before he was born. If you remember the promise that the angel Gabriel made to Zacharias his father when his birth was foretold that he would be full of the Holy Ghost from the time of his conception. Indeed, we will hear more about his proclaiming of the Christ on Wednesday when he leaped in his mother's womb at the greeting of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And, we will hear next Sunday about when St. John the Baptist proclaims that the Lord + Jesus is the One Who is coming and is to be preferred before him.

After spending his entire life proclaiming that the Lord + Jesus is the coming Messiah, why does it now appear that he is having doubts about that. The short answer: he is not. St. John the Baptist sends his disciples to hear from the Lord + Jesus the answer that he had been proclaiming since he was in his mother's womb. In this, St. John the Baptist not only directs his disciples to the truth about the Messiah, but he also directs all who hear these words from the Evangelist St. Matthew. *"Are You the coming One?"*

You will notice that our Lord + Jesus does not just simply answer the question with a "yes." He does not say, "Yup, that's me! I'm the Messiah." Rather, what does He say? He points them to His works. The blind see. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are being raised. And, the poor have the Gospel preached to them. All these things were foretold by the Prophet Isaiah regarding the "Coming One."

The Messiah would give sight to the blind to see the Ruler of the World made flesh. He would heal the legs of the lame, so that they could walk again into the place where the Lord God dwells; they could walk with the pilgrim throng to the temple. The lepers would no longer be outcasts on account of their uncleanness, and they would be able to worship with the rest of Israel. The deaf would be given the ability to hear the Word of God, and sing plainly the great deeds of the Messiah. The dead would be brought to life, and proclaim the great deeds of the Lord God, and tell of the heavenly home awaiting all those who believe. And, the poor would be reminded that true wealth is not found in earthly possessions, but in the spiritual possession of faith given to them by God through the preached Word.

The works of the Lord are the testament to Who the Lord + Jesus truly is. These works prove that He is the "Coming One." He is the One Whose way St. John the Baptist prepared. He is the One Who St. John the Baptist preached and proclaimed and prophesied. He is the One to Whom St. John the Baptist continues to direct his disciples, and all those who hear him. St. John the Baptist is resolute in his knowledge of Who the Messiah is.

He is not a shaky reed that is tossed about in the wind. He is not someone who is only concerned about material wealth; about good food and fine dress. For, he ate locusts and wild honey, and he was

dressed in camel's hair tied up with a leather belt. He was not concerned about the things of this life; the trappings of this life. But he was concerned about preaching the coming of the Messiah. He was concerned about preparing the way for the Lord + Jesus Christ. He prepared his hearers by proclaiming the Messiah with a message of repentance towards the forgiveness of sins. The same message that the ministers of God still preach today, if they are preachers worth their salt.

Like the prophets of old, St. John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the Messiah. But, unlike the prophets of old, he proclaimed the Messiah had already come. Therefore, he is the first of the New Testament preachers who point his hearers to what the Lord + Jesus has done.

Therefore, my dear friends, prepare your hearts and minds this Advent season with the things that the Lord + Jesus Christ has done for you. Prepare for His coming in the flesh on Christmas day by continuing to do what you are doing today—listening to His Word and participating in His Sacraments. Do not let the extra curriculars of this season draw you away from using the weapons of defense against your spiritual enemies. Keep your focus and faith on the One Who has come to win forgiveness for us, and bring us salvation, so that we may live with Him and all the saints—even St. John the Baptist—in Heaven for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!