

Ad te levavi
St. Matthew 21:1-9
November 30th, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

Behold, Thy King Cometh!

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Now this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, ‘Tell ye the daughter of Zion, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Awaken us, Lord God, that we may be ready when Thy Son cometh to receive Him with gladness and serve Thee with a pure heart; through the same Thy Son, + Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

My dear friends, we have entered into the season where the whole world turns its focus to Christmas. Some have even been focusing on Christmas since after Reformation Day, and some even before that. The world wants to skip over the season of Advent. The world is not much for repentance, so they have no need for a penitential season. Therefore, the world will focus on Christmas. Its focus, howbeit, will not be on what the Church focuses on at Christmas. For the world, Christmas is all about generosity, or family gatherings and togetherness. For them it is about Christmas cookies, and decorations, of Christmas parties and Christmas trees. And if we were to ask them what the purpose of Christmas was all about, well, they would get that wrong too.

Truth be told, many Christians would get the answer wrong, too. The world will, and some Christians, will say the purpose of Christmas is about sharing love and joy, about hope and peace. And while these are noble things to which to aspire, they are not the true purpose of Christmas. Some will even go so far as to say the catchphrase that annoys me to no end: + “Jesus is the reason for the season.” While technically not wrong, it is not completely right, either. For as it is with all bumper sticker, or T-shirt theology, it just does not say enough. True and accurate theology cannot be boiled down to a catchphrase on a bumper sticker or T-shirt.

Just like the thought that peace, joy, love, and hope are themes of Christmas, saying that + “Jesus is the reason for the season” while having a nice rhyme, does not say much of anything. Who is + Jesus? Is it the + Jesus of our society, which turns Him into just one more philosopher, or teacher, of good works. One more man with a moral code to which we should aspire. And even if we can say that it is the true Lord + Jesus of the Bible, the One Who came to redeem and save mankind. Such pithy statements do not tell us *why* He came, or *what* He is redeeming us from and from *what* He is saving us.

The reason He came and from what He is saving us from is the reason why the world and our

society want to skip over Advent, skip over the penitential season. For a season that is meant to focus our attention on our sin is not one on which our world and society want to place their focus. Our Lord + Jesus came to redeem us from sin and death. The reason for the season of Advent is to humble ourselves in contrition and shame over our sins. A society that does not want to acknowledge its sins, or sinfulness; a society that ignores the penalty of sin—death—has no need for a season of penitence. Hence, they will put up their decorations during this season of Advent, and when the actual season of Christmas comes, they will take it all down and move on to the next holiday.

In order for a person to truly be penitent, to humbly confess one's sins and live in contrition, one must know Who the real Lord + Jesus is and why He came. The Apostle and Evangelist tells us Who the Lord + Jesus truly is, and why He came in the Gospel reading for today. This is why the Church's year begins every year with this Gospel reading. It is the only Gospel reading in the Church's year which is so important it is read twice. For it declares that our Lord + Jesus is not just a man, but He is also the true Lord God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God became man to redeem mankind from its sin. Or, St. Matthew declares in His Gospel reading as our Lord enters triumphantly into Jerusalem, "Behold, thy King cometh unto Thee!"

This exclamation is a fulfillment of a prophecy from the Prophet Zechariah, which if one was following along with the readings printed in the announcement section of the bulletin, would have read it in its full context, since we spent this past week reading the Prophet Zechariah. The Prophet Zechariah is one of the prophets of the exile, of the Babylonian captivity. He prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius, king of the Persians and Medes. Zechariah's prophecy was to prepare the Israelites who had been in exile for seventy years to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple. This particular prophecy tells of a conquering king who would come and redeem Israel from its enemies. The king would thoroughly defeat all of Israel's enemies, and they would live in peace and happiness and abundance all the rest of their days.

It is a prophecy about the end of days, when the true Israel, the Church, will have peace and rest from their enemies of sin, death, and the devil. The King, the Lord + Jesus, comes into Jerusalem to suffer and die an innocent death for the atonement of the sins of the whole world, so that all those who believe on Him might have life and salvation.

In this Advent season, at the beginning of the Church's year, the Lord + Jesus comes to us, to His Church, in triumph over sin and death. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee" meek, and riding upon and ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This is the Lord + Jesus which comes to us. Not a + Jesus who is a moralist. Not a + Jesus who is undefined and ubiquitous, but He comes as the Lord God in our flesh. He comes to redeem and save us from sin and death. Who is the Lord + Jesus, and why has He come? He is the Lord God in our flesh, who has become man in order that He might perfectly fulfill the Law of God on behalf of mankind, and suffer our punishment upon the tree of the holy cross. On account of our manifold sins and transgressions, we deserve nothing but death. We deserve the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure. This is our focus in the penitential seasons. This is why the world would rather skip over this penitential season of Advent. It is why many Christians would skip over this penitential season of Advent, and start decorating for Christmas and listening to Christmas music and watching Christmas movies as soon as turkey day is done, or even before, because it is a depressing thing to reflect upon our sins and the consequences of our sins: death.

We would rather focus on joy and happiness, than on pain and suffering. We would rather not have to own up to our sinfulness. We would rather gloss over it, and pretend that it does not exist. But we are filled with sin and shame. We have inherited sin from our first parents. Sin and death inheres in us from the moment we are conceived and born into this world. This is the case with all of mankind, except for One Who has born into our flesh, but without sin. The Lord + Jesus took upon Himself our flesh, but without sin. Therefore, when He suffers the punishment that we all deserve on account of our

manifold sins and trespasses, His death is undeserved. He, being innocent of sin, does not deserve to die for sin, but He dies for our sin out of His great love for us. Therefore, He truly can come to the Church triumphantly. He can truly enter into the spiritual Jerusalem, the Church, as our King, for He has conquered sin and death by His death.

“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.” This is Who the Lord + Jesus is. He is the eternal King, Who has won His eternal throne by taking upon Himself our flesh, and suffering and dying in our place. This is why He came, to redeem and save us from sin and death. This is not something that fits on a bumper sticker or T-shirt. It is not something that can be turned into a pithy statement that rhymes. It also is something that our society and world avoid, and sadly, even some Christians avoid. For the world does not want to admit its sinfulness. It does not want to acknowledge that it deserves the Lord God’s eternal wrath and displeasure on account of its sinfulness.

This is why the world and society, and even some Christians, will say that + “Jesus is the reason for the season” but they really have no idea what that means. For the Lord + Jesus is the Lord God incarnate in our flesh. And He has come to set us free from the bonds of sin and death. Such notions get in the way of the world’s view of Christmas as a joyous and happy time. For they do not believe there can be any happiness when sin and death become our focus.

But this again is where the world is wrong. They talk about peace, joy, hope, and love, but they do not know what these things truly mean. For these things can only be given us—can only be appreciated by us—when we come to know and believe on the fact, that our Lord + Jesus has conquered all our enemies, and has opened up unto us an eternal kingdom where He will be our King, and we will be His people. There sin and death will no longer exist. There we will no longer feel the pain and misery of this life, but will forever enjoy peace and joy and love. This is the hope which we long for in this life.

And this is why the Church, why we, wait for the season of Christmas, and place it after the season of Advent. For the Church’s year reflects our very own lives. We have ups and downs in this life. We have times of joy and sorrow. We have times of fasting and feasting. The Church’s year reflects this aspect of our lives. We do ourselves no favors skipping over the sad parts of life. For when we reach the end of sad seasons, our joy is fuller and more complete. When we have completed the penitential season of Advent, when we have in contrition and humility considered and reflected upon our sins, then the joy of the celebration of the birth of our Savior from sin, of our Lord God taking upon Himself our flesh in order to redeem us from sin, is all the more joyous and merry and happy.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us prepare for that season of joy by focusing on the true reason for that joy. That our Lord + Jesus has come to us meekly and lowly in our flesh, to redeem us from sin and death, and be our King for all eternity. Then all of the traditions of Christmas, the decorations, parties, Christmas trees, and presents will actually matter and mean something. For they are a reflection and preparation for the eternal joys that await us in heaven. May the Lord God Almighty grant us a happy new Church year, and may He be with us throughout the coming Church’s year. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without

end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!