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A late Anglican Bishop told a story that went something like this: *The devil once called his three chief demons together. He said to them, "We need a new campaign to try to steal some more souls. Do any of you have any bright ideas?" The first demon says, "This isn't exactly new, but why don't we try to tell them that there is no God?" To which Satan replied, "Modern man has stolen that idea, and it has never worked very well for us anyway." The second demon said, "Why don't we tell them that there is no such thing as the devil?" Satan said, "That never works - we'd have to get them to stop reading newspapers and watching TV too." The third demon said, "Why don't we just tell them that there is no hurry." The third demon won the day.*

*Why don't we just tell them there is no hurry?* Even after a long Trinity Season, and what was considered a late Thanksgiving Day, it is finally the first Sunday of Advent, and the rush of the secular Christmas Season is already in full swing. Let us not forget that today is the Church's New Year's Day. We begin a new Church Year as we flip back through our prayer books to the Sundays in Advent, yet many of us may overlook an important Feast Day that takes place on the last day of the Church Year, but is located at the beginning of the Saints Days in the Prayerbook. Yesterday was the feast day of St. Andrew the Apostle. One might say there is something quintessentially Anglican about keeping St. Andrew's feast day, perhaps because it is a popular feast in the British Isles, as St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. It is no coincidence that the Feast of St. Andrew falls right before the beginning of Advent. St. Andrew provides an important lesson for us this Advent season, as St. Andrew is the disciple who was in a hurry to follow Jesus. We learned last week, on the Sunday before Advent, or "Stir-up Sunday," that it was St. Andrew who brought the boy with the two fish and five small loaves of bread to Jesus, which Jesus then blessed, and multiplied, feeding five thousand people. Friday, on the eve of St. Andrew's Day, we were reminded that it was Andrew who when he heard St. John the Baptist say, *Behold the Lamb of God*, immediately went and followed Jesus. Jesus turned to Andrew and asked him *whom do you seek?* Andrew answered by asking, *Rabbi, where do you live?* He wasted no time in following Jesus. St. Augustine writes that it was from that moment that Andrew considered himself a disciple of Jesus, and no longer of John the Baptist. A few verses later it is Andrew who brings Peter to Jesus, saying *we have found the Messiah*. Andrew was not only given a special grace to recognize Jesus but had a talent for bringing people to Him. For this reason the Church prays on St. Andrew's Day, *Almighty God, who didst give such grace unto thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; Grant unto us all, that we, being called by thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil thy holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord*. The Church prays that we will be like Andrew in wasting no time to follow Christ without delay, for Christ desires that each one of us will be His true disciples.

The Church continues this prayer and lesson this first Sunday of Advent. We are given the gentle reminder that we should *know the time*, that, *it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed...the day is at hand*. The "day" the church refers to is Christmas Day, in which we are preparing ourselves to receive Jesus through Holy Communion this Christmas, but the church also refers to that day, which is to come, when Jesus Christ comes again in power and glory at the Second Coming. This Advent season is meant to prepare us for

both the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. But as St. Andrew, the disciples, and the multitude that celebrate Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in today's Gospel remind us, we each have a part to play in the preparations. This is why this Gospel lesson, which we normally associate with Palm Sunday, was chosen for this morning. We wonder if the two disciples Jesus sent to find the donkey and its foal, had any idea that they were helping to fulfil the prophecy of Zechariah, *rejoice, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* We may safely assume that the multitude who thronged the road to Jerusalem had no idea that they were helping to prepare for their own salvation by waving palms and singing as Jesus rode into the city.

The lesson for each one of us this morning is that we are each called to prepare for Jesus' entry into our homes, families, cities, and country, and without delay. In fact, if we look closely at this morning's lessons, we find that there are three types of people figured in this Gospel. There are the disciples, like Andrew, Peter, and John, who bring people to Jesus and help bring Jesus to the people of Jerusalem. These disciples fade into the background while the crowd sings *blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.* Some enthusiastically greet Him waving palm branches, singing *Hosanna*, and escort Him into the Holy City. Then, there are those who are found watching from a distance, who had previously said to themselves that there was no need to hurry, they did not heed the warning of the prophets and apostles and were too caught up in material and worldly gain. After all, because they had been looking for the coming of the Messiah for almost a thousand years, they thought there was no need to hurry, to get themselves or the Temple in order. After all, there had been false prophets and false Christs. Their cynicism would have been great. And for this reason they would, no doubt, be surprised to learn that they were already in the presence of the the judgment of God in Jesus Christ.

*Why don't we just tell them there is no hurry?* This tactic of the enemy is not new, for it is as old as all other temptations. Satan forever had been trying to convince men that there was no God. Satan even probably tempted men to believe that there was no devil. But his particular temptation – that there is no hurry, seems an effective weapon drawn from his arsenal. We think to ourselves, *there is no hurry, I can do that when I am older, or I will give up that sin tomorrow, or My health is perfect, why should I think about meeting Christ anytime soon, or we have been waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ for over a thousand years.* But the Book of Proverbs reminds us that we are not promised tomorrow. Therefore, we are invited to pause and reflect, how do we plan to prepare ourselves to receive Christ when He comes again, not just as a babe in Bethlehem, but when He comes again on the Last Day? How prepared are we to meet Christ? What are we doing to help prepare our families and parish to receive Christ? I pray that we will each be found among Christ's true disciples, like St. Andrew, who heard the call of Christ and followed Him without delay. May we never be like the Pharisees and money changers in the temple, who thought that *there was no need to hurry.* We have much to meditate on in this coming week and Advent season, as we draw ever nearer to Christmas, and our schedules and lists of things to do get longer. May we place at the top of that list our mission as disciples to bring the world to Christ and Christ to the world not just this Advent season, but for the rest of our lives. May our hearts and homes become houses of prayer and may we so live by faith in the Christ Who came, as to be ready for the Christ Who is coming. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light.* Amen.