

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**First Sunday in Advent (2021)**

**Behold, Your King Comes to You**

**Rev. Toby Byrd**

***“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” (Matthew 21:5, ESV)***

“Advent begins a period of preparation for Christmas, but it is also the entrance into the new church year. It is a season that looks ahead to the future. It is indeed fitting to behold Christ as a King of the future, as our coming King, and thus bring Him our hosannas. He is no longer as He was on the First Palm Sunday, and yet He is still entirely the same person. No longer is He clothed in the form of a new servant; His physical being no longer serves to veil the Godhead that fully dwelled in Him. Rather, His humanity is illuminated, glorified, and is a worthy revelation of His eternal deity.

His coming to us is only the realization of His presence, and yet for us a genuine coming; for we did not see and hear Him before, and now we see Him more closely and recognize Him more clearly. Blessed be His coming! Praise be to Him for visiting us daily.”

These opening words of our sermon today are those of the great, nineteenth century Lutheran pastor, Wilhelm Löeche, whose mission activities in North America are renowned. His words usher in this new Advent season of the church year with its focus on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we focus on our Lord’s coming, we are reminded of His glorious work of salvation which He brought to all men with His coming in the flesh. Reminded of His incarnation, our worship services in every year, this new year will be no different, focus solely on Him who is the crucified and risen Lord, the One who will come again in glory which is the keynote of our text and message for today; *Behold, Your King comes to You.*

Our Lord Jesus is indeed a King, whose royal entry into Jerusalem is described in our Gospel Reading for today. Fulfilling the promise of the prophet Zechariah, Jesus enters Jerusalem as the King of the daughter of Zion riding on a donkey ***“on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9, ESV)***. Earthly kings reign by the grace of God; but Jesus reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords because He is true God, the Lord of heaven and earth who reveals His omniscient power by sending two of His disciples to retrieve for His use, a donkey and her colt, saying to them: ***“If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” (Matthew 21:3, ESV)*** The incarnate Son of God, the son of David, the Word made flesh, rides into Jerusalem to a chorus of Hosanna’s on another man’s beast of burden, fulfilling His heavenly Father’s will to save all mankind from their slavery to sin. As He did for the people of Israel, He does also for you and me, and we are bold to say; *Behold, Your King Comes to You*, offering Himself as a sacrifice to rescue you from sin, death, and the devil.

Yes, this Jesus is a King, but He is unlike any king that has ever existed; He is our heavenly King who sits upon the throne of David forever. Earthly kings are restricted by their kingdom boundaries, but Jesus is King wherever He goes. Earthly kings derive their property and wealth from their subjects, but Jesus bestows eternal property and wealth upon all who call Him Lord. His Kingdom is a particular Kingdom, and He is a particular King. He is your King, but you do not seek Him, He seeks you. His kingdom is the Christian Church, made up of followers of Him

who are made believers of His atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins, and they are kept in that saving faith through His means of grace, Word, and Sacrament. It is by these means that Jesus rules His Kingdom. Therefore, as we see Him riding into Jerusalem atop the colt of a donkey, we behold a King, a most wonderful King, who rules by grace and leads His subjects to His everlasting Kingdom of Glory.

*Behold, Your King Comes to You.* This is the Advent message. Advent means coming and Jesus is the coming One, the coming King. Although the crowds may have seen Him as a conquering hero, our Lord does not ride into Jerusalem as conqueror. No, He comes as a humble and meek servant, riding on a donkey, a beast of burden. He does not come to conquer but rather, to bring peace. His mission was always to bring peace between mankind and His heavenly Father, saving His people from His Father's wrath against their sin. He does not do this by the power of His office, but by meekness, by nonresistance, by submitting to the cruelty of His enemies, by permitting Himself to be betrayed, taken captive, falsely accused, cruelly tortured, crucified, and slain. He, the innocent came for the guilty, and He fulfilled His mission by becoming the sacrificial Lamb of God, appeasing His Father's wrath. By His death, this King bestows the gifts of His heavenly Father's grace and forgiveness upon His subjects.

*Behold, Your King Comes to You.* This great and mighty King, far superior to any man on earth is coming to us. But how should we, lowly, sin-filled creatures receive Him?

We receive Him through a humble faith, a faith that cries out, my Lord and my God. In today's Gospel Reading we see such a reception by the people as Jesus enters Jerusalem on the first day of the week, entering by a dusty road. As He approaches, the people honor Him by keeping His path free of dust, throwing their cloaks and palm branches onto the road. Today, on the first day of week our Lord, this King of kings, comes to us in Word and Sacrament ministry, honoring us with His presence, offering us a gift of which we are not worthy, His forgiveness. As the people did in Jerusalem, we, too, humbly kneel before Him acknowledging that we are dust, unworthy of His forgiveness. But as He graced the people of Jerusalem, He graces us when in repentance we confess our sins and He grants our petition, forgiving us. Moreover, His forgiveness is true for He paid for it by His bloody suffering and death. Now, for His sake, His heavenly Father forgives us, cleansing us of all sin while refreshes us with the message of reconciliation.

He who came to His people lowly and riding on the back of a donkey, comes to us in His blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, giving us His true Body and Blood. In anticipation of His arrival, and as the people sang out at His entrance into Jerusalem, we sing shouts of acclamation and joy in the Sanctus, singing; "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest." As He blesses us with His arrival, with His presence, we continue to sing, "Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest."

Having received His blessed gifts, His Body and Blood, and filled with His saving grace we rejoice, singing the words of the Nunc Dimittis, "Lord, now let us Thou Thy servants depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." With these words we confess that Jesus Christ is our Savior, King, and Lord, who has rescued us from ourselves, from death, and from hell.

In Divine Service the Lord Jesus comes and He is the One in charge. In His walk upon this earth, wherever He went He brought with Him the Word of God, it is no different in Divine Service, a service in harmony with Holy Scripture. As He did when entering Jerusalem, He also

does in Divine Service, He is the One doing the serving. He is the source of our worship as God's people.

Therefore, in this Advent season as in those of the past, we gather to thank Him for His service to us; for His coming at His incarnation, for His coming to Jerusalem to offer Himself as our substitute for sin, for His coming to us each Lord's Day, and for His coming again, one last time, to take His people home with Him in the resurrection. Yes, this Advent season is filled with our celebration of His comings.

Thanking Jesus though is more than just thanking Him for His gifts, it is also doing as He commanded. When Jesus sent His two disciples to bring back the donkey and her colt, St. Matthew tells us, "***The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them***" (***Matthew 21:6, ESV***) It could be no other way. The King gives orders, the people obey. But too often, there is an unwillingness in our heart to obey, too often we say we don't want to serve Him. Our old Adam has difficulty agreeing with what our Lord requires of us in Scripture. Often the service He asks us to render seems burdensome. Yet should we not ask ourselves, compared to His service rendered for us, could our burden ever be too great?

As our Lord had need of the service of His two disciples, our Lord has need of our service too. He calls on us to help grow His Church. We who confess His coming, who experience it every Lord's Day, who confess the truth that He will come again in glory on the Last Day to take His people to the new heaven and the new earth, do we not desire to fulfill His command and add others to that great heavenly host? I trust we do.

Thus, in service to Him, He calls on us to confess Him before men with shouts of adoration and humble prayer. He calls on us to sing Hosannas, telling the world that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is the Son of David and the Son of God, who is the Savior of all mankind from sin, death, and the devil. Like the owner of the donkey and her colt, we, too, are to give of our time and talent to the Lord. We are to give our very lives, if need be, in service to Him. We are to proclaim His salvation and His coming again, willingly paying tribute to Him by supporting the proclamation of His Gospel among men that others, too, may become citizens of Christ's heavenly Kingdom and be rescued from the fire of hell. So we pray, "May we always be obedient servants to our King."

*Behold, Your King Comes to You*, and with this message we enter a new church year. Not too far away lies Christmas, when our King comes to us as the Incarnate Son of God born of a virgin in a lowly stable. In that stable God sends His only begotten Son into this world fulfilling His promise in the garden to rescue man from sin, and thereby offering you and me and the whole world divine comfort and supreme hope. God grant that you and I may clearly see in our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem His appeal for us to receive Him, to follow Him, and to serve Him all our days as His baptized children in His blessed and gracious Kingdom on earth. In Jesus name. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.