Jesu Juva

**Ad Te Levavi —The First Sunday in Advent**

Text: St. Matthew 21:1-9

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The message of Advent is this: Jesus is coming! Advent tells us that the time of our Lord is upon us. Yet, Advent and its season are not simply a welcome mat for Christmas. The season of Advent speaks of our Lord who has already come. Advent tells us that the One whom God the Father promised to His people, actually appeared in world history in the fullness of time—time, that is, as God measures time. When He appeared, He was born of the flesh and blood of a lowly, poor, virgin, teenaged Jewish girl, permanently uniting Himself to our human nature.

Advent speaks also of our Lord, who, even this very day, continues to come to us with all of His grace and favor through His blessed Word and Sacraments. Still, that is not all. Advent speaks of our Lord who will come again at the end of time to judge both the living and the dead. Jesus, whom the world nailed to the Cross, shall return with tremendous majesty and glory to confront His rebellious creatures as their Savior and Judge.

Therefore, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

Yet, that is not quite the picture of majesty and power as one might imagine, is it? Zechariah’s prophecy does not sound like something we should be all that excited about—at least by worldly standards, and yet, that is the message of Advent. Jesus is coming! The time of our Lord is at hand!

Today, we have witnessed Jesus Christ, our Lord, as He rode into Jerusalem as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Like all the triumphant generals of the ancients, He rode into His capital city in triumph. The people shouted and sang. They removed their coats and cut branches from trees to lay before Him. They hailed Him as a king and savior, but this King will be a disappointment to many.

While the people are expecting a king of majesty and power, Jesus did not seem to quite measure up. In fact, instead of receiving a crown of gold and a royal throne fit for a king, by week’s end, Jesus would wear a crown of thorns and His enemies, among whom are many of the very same people who shouted their hosannas to the Son of David, nailed Him to His throne, mocking Him and spitting upon Him as they shouted curses at Him and taunted Him that He could not even save Himself. Our Lord’s Body would bear the scars and bruises of battle, and He would die. Yet, His death was necessary. Jesus’ death was necessary because in His death is His triumph—our triumph. With His death in our place, He won for us the age-old battle against sin, death, and Satan.

So, do not let Jesus’ humble entrance and appearance fool you. He truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the very Word of God made flesh, who, in the beginning, created all things, and who sustains all things in His being.

His greatest entrance, however, He is saving for the end of time, for the Last Day, when He will come again to be our judge. In the here and now, however, He comes to us *“Lowly and riding on a donkey.”*

In the here and now, Jesus comes in hidden, mysterious ways which one could never expect. He comes in a Word of forgiveness, in a splash of Baptismal water, in a morsel of bread, and a sip of wine. These humble things He has pressed into divine service so that He may come to you making His humble entrance into your life.

Jesus came with a holy purpose; He is a Man with a mission as it were. He will not be turned from it, though He knew what it meant to carry this mission to completion. He came to Jerusalem, to the place of sacrifice, to die as *the* perfect, spotless Sacrifice. He came to fulfill a promise that is nothing less than the Word of God. He came to crush the head of Satan and beat back Hell and death. Therefore, repentant sinners, rejoice! Your King has come!

The Prophet Zechariah tells us, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you.”* The Messiah came to die, and the people praised Him. *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!”* Their praise rings out, echoing down through the ages because the death of this Man was no ordinary death. Rather, it is the death of death. In the death of Jesus, the grave is conquered now and forever!

Today, we are blessed to join in this celebration, singing our hosannas to our Lord as we celebrate His coming to us in His Holy Body and Blood given to us in His Holy Supper for us poor sinners to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins. In our liturgy, we join in this song of praise in the words of the Sanctus. We sing *“Holy, Holy, Holy,”* with all the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. We sing with all the blessed saints who have proceeded us and all those who will come long after we are gone. We bow with them before our God and King, and lay our prayers and our sins on the path before Him.

You may not have considered this but we are living in the last days, the days between Jesus’ first and second Advent. We look back on His first Advent and rejoice. We look forward to His second Advent in eager anticipation as we await His promised reappearing.

Yet, we, who are Advent people, who live our lives in this New Testament age, do not wait alone. For the Prophet, Isaiah, tells us, *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Immanuel.”* St. Matthew also tells us the same and gives us the meaning of this beautiful Name: *“Immanuel which is translated, God with us.”* Our Messiah, our *“Immanuel,”* our *“God with us,”* *is* with us, even as He promised to be with us unto the end of the age.

So, Jesus is with us, His promise kept. He comes to us now in His Word and Sacraments. He comes, breathed into us by the same Holy Spirit and in the same way He came to the Blessed Virgin’s womb—by hearing. He comes, not simply in some spiritual or abstract way; Christ comes to us in His living Flesh. Just as the Virgin Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and conceived a Child, so too, you are overshadowed and within your heart faith is conceived, giving birth to new life.

This life is nurtured and made strong in the Meal that Jesus has given us until the Day of His promised return. With this Divine Meal, we proclaim Jesus’ death until He comes again. Yet, we do not simply proclaim His death until He comes again; we also proclaim what His death means to us: holy absolution, that is, the forgiveness of all our sins. His death is absolution because it is the substitutionary, universal, atonement for our death which He died in our place.

Nailed to the Cross with Him, all your dirty little secrets, the malice, the lust, the greed, and pride that reside deep in the core of your being, the thousand and one lies you have told for no good reason, your private prejudices, and judgmental ways, all the uncleanness of your heart, all have given way to the forgiveness of sins found only in the crucifixion of Jesus, and as the blessed Martin Luther wrote, *“where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation”* (Martin Luther’s explanation of the Sacrament of the Altar, the Small Catechism). Therefore, in celebrating the Lord’s Supper we proclaim our life in Christ until He comes again in glory to bring us home that we may live with Him for eternity.

So, Advent also serves to remind us that we wait. Indeed, we wait because we *are* Advent people. We live in the afterglow of Christ’s first Advent and the hope of His second Advent in His promised return. Even so, we do not hope like heathens and pagans. We do not hope like those who have no hope. Christian hope is not a *“maybe”* or *“perhaps.”* Christian hope is a sure and certain fact, a conviction. It is a fact because it is God’s promise and God cannot lie.

Therefore, we Christians rejoice in the first Advent of our Lord Jesus even while we look forward to His second Advent with great joy. We yearn for the return of our reigning Lord who is seated at the right hand of the Father. Sure, we keep one eye on Christmas, but with the other, we watch for the second coming of Christ.

With His second coming, the One who was born for you of Mary, who died for you on the Cross, who rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended for you into Heaven, will return from Heaven and raise a new creation out of the death and ashes of the old. His return will make all things new. He will raise you from the dead and give you the eternal life that is already yours, even now, through faith in Him.

The message of Advent is that your King has come, and your King will come again. Of this, you can be sure. On that great and glorious Day, you will sing, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”*

Still, even today we sing our hosannas to Christ our King—*“Save us, Lord.”* Jesus has heard our voices as they are raised in song and prayer, and answers us with Words of Life, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

 Soli Deo Gloria

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