

Advent 1      11/30/14  
Mark 11:1-10    B

## OUR SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 11<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF MARK'S GOSPEL

There is a story of GEN George Washington, when he was commander of the continental army. As he rode his horse, the wind caused his coat to cover the insignia of his rank. He happened upon a corporal commanding his men to lift a heavy log beyond their ability. He was shouting at them and commanding them to "heave ho". Since they could not do it, Washington dismounted quickly, walked over, and, with his strong and tall body, gave the log a quick push, and it went into its place. Turning to the corporal, he asked why he had not helped his men, to which the man replied, "Sir, do you not see that I am a corporal?" George Washington humbly opened his coat and said, "Yes, sir, I see you are a corporal, but I wish for you to see that I am a general."

Appearances can be deceiving. Things are not always as they appear to be. Look at our Gospel this morning.

Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. *Riding* in and of itself is noteworthy, because most people, including most often Jesus, walked. Riding was left to the rich, the powerful, and the soldiers -- and not just any soldiers, but the officers in charge. But here is Jesus -- riding. He is riding in a parade which He echoes, however faintly, the coronation ride of the ancient kings of Israel.

Of course, the coronation of a king meant a great horse. Kings were important people. But not Jesus, He rides a beast of burden. And Jesus, bears a burden -- the sin of all mankind. Just as Zechariah prophesied, He

came in humility to serve, not to be served.

And, this is His coronation. It was His coronation as the Messiah. He was about to ascend His throne -- but it wasn't in a palace in Jerusalem. It was on a lowly hill of execution, just outside of town. His throne would be a cross. He came to take that reign and reign from it. Jesus came to die on that cross -- deliberately and with great purpose.

His purpose was to redeem us all from sin and rescue us from death - - both the physical death of the body and the eternal death of body and soul in hell. His resurrection on Easter proclaims that Jesus accomplished His mission. Your sins, and mine, are forgiven, bought and paid for. We are forgiven. The 3rd day, Jesus rose from the dead. That means that there awaits a resurrection for us.

That is good news for us, because appearances can be deceiving. We don't always appear to be what we are -- not even to ourselves and to our own eyes.

Does your life run contrary to appearances? Do you appear to the world and, even to yourself, to be a child of God and an heir of heaven? A look at your life, your days and nights, your attitudes and emotions, may well argue to the contrary. Would a righteous child of God be hassled at work or troubled by arguments with family? Would one who shares Christ's victory over death still suffer from sickness, weakness, injury and death? Would one who is forgiven for all of his sins still contend with -- and often lose to -- temptation, sin and failure? No. By all appearances, being a Christian doesn't seem to help you much.

At least, that is what the devil would have you believe. But you do not rely on appearances; you rely on the Word of God. And so you

remember the King who lies in a manger, rides a donkey into Jerusalem, and suffers death on the cross.

Appearances can be deceiving. Baptized into Jesus; you live in Him. Remember your Lord's earthly life. Born in a Judean stable, raised the son of a humble carpenter, riding a donkey, crowned on a cross -- our Lord's power and victory often appeared unremarkable, even shameful, to this world. There is comfort in this for you. Though your life may seem inglorious, unpleasant, downright painful, it means that your Lord understands and sympathizes with you in your weakness.

The first Sunday in Advent focuses on the three comings of our Savior. The 1<sup>st</sup> time, He came as the King of manger, donkey and cross to save us. He will come again as the King of Kings to judge the living and the dead. Today, as we live between these two comings, He is still our coming Savior. He is the King incarnate present with you, to save you, in water, bread and wine, and Word.

Appearances can be deceiving. Things are not always as they appear to be. It appears to the world and, perhaps even to our reason and senses that it's just water, just bread and wine, just words. Yet, these are the means Jesus Himself has chosen to come to us. God's Word teaches: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Ac 2:38) ... "Take, eat; this is My body...Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:26-27) ... "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Ro 10:17)." Human eyes and human reason may see only a baby in a manger, a dead body on a cross, water, bread and wine. But, faith sees Jesus, present with us, to

forgive us, to strengthen us, to save us. And, we walk by faith, not by sight.

Despite appearances, in faith, you know that Jesus is with you, blessed you with His favor and help for today and eternity. Today, you may face trouble and suffering, but the Lord uses that to your good. Hassles at work and arguments with family are the result of sin, yes; but they are far from proof that God does not love you. If He did not love you, He would not visit you to save you now. No, these troubles are continued reminders that we are sinners living in a sinful world, but that Jesus has come to us in this world of sin and is present with us. Sickness, weakness, injury and death will still afflict you; the devil will try to convince you that God is angry at you, that He is punishing you, but this is not the case. Were God angry with you, He would not come to save you. No, let sickness and weakness constantly remind you not to trust in your own health for salvation; and let the promises of God assure you that He who conquered death will use even your death for your good -- to deliver you to life everlasting. You will still suffer temptation and failure, and you will still sin. It is no excuse, and such sin can lead to unbelief and condemnation; but your failures do not mean that God has failed you. If God has forsaken you, He would not come to save you; but He does come, and His words declare that you are not forsaken: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved ... This is My body - this is My blood, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins ... Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven."

You may be troubled, but you are not forsaken. He who comes in the name of the Lord comes to you. And He comes to you to save now.

"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"