

Advent 1 12/1/19
St. Matthew 21:1-11 A

SERMON TEXT: GOSPEL READING FROM THE 21ST CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

I don't mean to start this morning on a note of pessimism, but I am already sick and tired of winter weather advisories, winter storm warnings, winter storm watches, blizzard warnings, not to mention snow and cold. .

Snow – and stabbings and murders by terrorists, school shootings, wars and rumors of wars, every disease and illness, every word of gossip and slander and hatred, every regret, every worry and every fear and every upheaval in the world around us and in our lives -- is a reminder to us of why we pray, "Come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins." That is our Advent prayer and we sing that prayer in the words of Luther's Advent hymn, "Savior of the nations, come."

Our prayer today and throughout this Advent season is that our Lord would come and rescue us from the threatening perils of our sins; that He would come and save us by His mighty deliverance. We, who are spiritually poor and lowly, wait for the riches of His grace. We, who are sinful mortals, wait for Him to open all portals of His grace.

This is the season of our Savior's birth. To clean the cliché, "Jesus is the Reason for the Season." Yet, instead of a time of great joy, many find this a season of stress and despair and loneliness. Are you already stressed out at the thought of buying gifts, cooking and cleaning, decorating, and making travel plans? Are you feeling lonely not having anyone to celebrate with this Christmas? Will there be a family member missing this Christmas because of death, or family conflict? Inside your heart is there the pain of sin over what was said or done?

We pray: Come Lord Jesus and rescue us from sin and death. Come and give us the comfort and strength we need. Come and give us peace and hope. Come and provide a pathway to heaven. Come and open the bars of death. Come and bless us with life and salvation. Because we are unworthy, we cannot come to Christ, so Christ must come to us.

After Adam and Eve fell into sin, they hid from God. They did not pray, "Come, Lord and rescue us." Instead, they were afraid of God. If there was to be reconciliation between God and man, God had to bring that reconciliation about. Adam and Eve hid, so God had to go looking, searching for them. The Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" Adam said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid". Eventually, Adam and Eve admitted that they ate the forbidden fruit. Then, without any apology or any strings attached, God made a promise that would contain salvation for the whole world. Speaking to the serpent, the Lord God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Ge 3).

In these words, God promised to send a Savior who would win the victory over our arch-enemy, Satan. In the process, the Savior would be bruised. But in the end, the Savior would be strong enough to crush Satan's head. This Savior would be human, born of human mother and yet also God, able to defeat Satan. This was good news for Adam and Eve. Their salvation was based on faith in this coming Savior.

But when would He come? Would He come during Adam and Eve's life time? Would it be Cain, Adam and Eve's first born? After Cain killed his brother Abel, they knew that the Savior was not Cain. The Savior had to come from another woman. But, who would that woman be and when

would He come?

True to His Promise, ever faithful to His Word, "When the fullness of time had come, God send forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Ga 4:4-5). This is what Christmas is all about. That woman was Mary and the Savior was born in Bethlehem. As the angel told him to do, Joseph named Him, Jesus, "Savior." In Luther's Advent hymn, he puts it this way,

Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh --
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh (332:3).

The promise made to Adam and Eve was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. He was born for the purpose of saving His people from their sins. He was born in order to die.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, on what we call "Palm Sunday," He came as a King to conquer through His suffering and death upon the cross. He came to win the victory over death and the devil for us.

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus has come to save us from all the threatening perils of our sins. He heard the cry of His people and came to save us from sin, death, and the devil.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem the people cried out saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest" (v. 9). Hosanna means "save now." In other words, they cried out, "Come, O Son of David, and save us now from our sins." Their Advent prayer was answered. They were seeing with their own eyes, "He who comes in the name of the Lord" for the purpose of rescuing them and the whole world from the threatening perils of sin.

Later that week, on a day we call "Good Friday," Jesus died upon the

cross. In the process, Jesus was bruised by Satan with blows and whips and thorns and nails. But in the end, Jesus crushed the head of Satan by making the righteous payment for sin so that we would be forgiven and by winning victory over death with His resurrection.

The 24th Psalm asks the question, "Who is this king of glory?" and answers the question, "The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!" Then the Psalmist invites the people to "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in".

Do we need to lift up our heads today? Now that Jesus had already come in the past, does our Advent prayer change? No, it does not change. Do we still need His coming? Snow, terrorism, wars, tornadoes, floods, cancer, strokes, gossip, heartache, troubles, and tears all reminds that yes, as sinners in a sinful world, we continually need God to come with His grace and mercy. Our prayer is: "Come, Lord, Jesus even today and rescue and save us. Hosanna, Lord. Save us now. You are the One who can save us, not we ourselves, but only you alone."

The Good News is that our King of glory is present with us today. He does not come with pomp and power. He does not come through feelings, dreams, and visions. He comes in through the means that He Himself has chosen. He comes through Word and Sacrament. He comes to remove our fear of judgment. He comes to speak words of forgiveness and comfort into our ears. He comes to give us rest from our souls.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem with lowliness and humility, so also, He comes today in the lowliness and humility of bread and wine. Before we commune, we rightly sing, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He, Blessed is He, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." He comes now in the Holy Supper in order to rescue us from the

threatening perils of our sins. He comes now to give us pardon and peace. He comes now to give us forgiveness for all our sin.

Therefore, let us not delay. Let us not hide from God, like Adam and Eve. But let us receive our Lord Jesus as He now comes to us in His body and blood.

Dearly beloved, rejoice. Our Advent prayer is answered. The King of glory is here. Lift up your heads. He comes now to save you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.