

Advent 1 11/27/22
St. Matthew 21:1-11 A

TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 21ST CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Promises, promises. Our lives are filled with promises. Think of the commercials that fill the airwaves. The car company promises “the ultimate driving experience”. One brewer of beer promises “the world’s most refreshing beer”. And of course, the insurance company that promises, 15 minutes or less can save you 15% or more on your car insurance.”

You don’t have to listen to commercials to hear promises. You’ve heard them in your life. Like at your wedding, when your spouse promised to love you for better, for worse, but now they really don’t. On the day of their confirmation, you heard your son, your daughter promise to “intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord’s Supper faithfully ... “to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, words, and deed to remain true to God”. Now, they break your heart because they don’t.

Promises, promises. Our lives are filled with promises, and we are skeptical, perhaps because we’ve heard so many promises – many of which have turned out not to be true – that we just turn a deaf ear to them.

If anyone had promises they should have believed and didn’t, it was the Israelites and God’s promises to them of the Messiah. The Israelites had many glorious promises concerning the Messiah – how He would appear on earth in Bethlehem of Judea; how He would establish the throne of David as an everlasting kingdom; how He would redeem His people from all sin and death. These were the promises the Prophets of the Old Testament wrote about and they were well-known to the children of the Old Testament.

And yet, when false preachers arose to proclaim their lies, the Israelites heard them with great joy. Lies like the Messiah would come in worldly glory and so that in every way -- every way their little hearts demanded -- their lives would be filled with worldly power, fame, and money, and more and more money.

So, let me ask you: To what is your heart inclined? That can be answered with one word: GLORY! It should not surprise us, certainly not shock us, that God's Word was ignored and the false preachers believed by the Israelites. Why should it not surprise us? We do it all the time.

The Bible promises us, "that for those who love God all things work together for **good**;" yet, when bad things happen, we don't cry in faith, "What good are you working for me, Lord;" we naval gaze and feel sorry for ourselves (Ro 8:28).

We want the glory of health, not doctor appointments and the uncertainty of more surgeries and treatments. We want the glory of wealth and privilege, not working by sweat of our brow and crime and vandalism and gossip. We want to be married to that supermodel, not the wife God gave you. You want that rich hunk, not that Neanderthal you are married to that can't even pick up his wet towel from the bathroom floor. We want the glory of our children being above average and the captain of every sports team, not children that -- are, well, children. We want popularity with our neighbors and their praise and accolades, and we will do whatever it takes to get it, even if God calls it sin.

So that the Jews might be warned and not deceived by such carnal teaching, God proclaimed in plain words through the Prophet Zechariah that the Messiah would not come as an earthly king in great pomp and splendor, but riding on a donkey, a beast of burden.

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'" (v. 5).

So that everyone could see and hear that God had kept His promise, our King rides in broad daylight into Jerusalem to fight for His people and win the victory for them on a donkey. Our King does this to show His humility, that all notions of earthly glory should be ignored and dismissed.

We want glory. And, we look to earthly things and earthly kings to give it to us. But, no emperor or king can deliver you from sin; money and goods cannot remove the sting of the grave; fame and popularity cannot help you against eternal hell.

But, our King Jesus delivers you not only from one sin but from all your sin. And not you only, but the whole world. He comes to take away not only temporal pain and bodily sickness, but eternal death.

Jesus rides to rob death of its power, hell of its destruction, crush the head of the devil under His feet, and thus deliver us from sin and death, and open heaven's door to us that it may be our home and we may dwell with Him there. This He does through His cross and resurrection.

And that, Dear Friends in Christ, is the reason for our rejoicing. He is our Savior King. When we are in trouble because of our sin or in danger of death, we can comfort ourselves in Him. All that He did and accomplished by His coming -- His 1st coming -- was for us and for our salvation.

Dear Saints of God, life with terrorism, blizzards, tornadoes, floods, cancer, strokes, gossip, heartache, troubles, and tears all reminds that yes, as sinners in a sinful world, we continually need Christ with His grace and favor. And so we pray, "Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins

and saved by Your mighty deliverance.” God hears and answers our prayer.

As we live in the time between the 1st and 2nd Coming of Jesus, He is still our coming Savior. Still today, He comes to us in His most humble way. He comes to us in the means of grace – simple water, bread and wine, and His Word. These are the means where He Himself has promised to be found. Through these means, He comes to speak words of forgiveness and comfort. He comes to remove our fears. He comes to give us peace for our souls.

Holy Baptism was instituted by our Savior to clothe you with His own righteousness, so that His holiness and innocence would be yours. Yes, you are a poor sinner, but Jesus comforts you by taking your sin and your death and giving you His resurrection, His life, and the glory of His home of heaven.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem in lowliness, so also, He comes today in the lowliness 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 to give us forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation.

The Evangelist John writes, in the 11th chapter of his Gospel, that our Lord's dear friend Lazarus was dead and four days in the tomb. But Jesus spoke, and His words brought Lazarus forth from the death of the grave. In that same way, Jesus speaks His words of life into us, to raise us from the death of our sin. Peter once said to the Savior, "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68)." We go to Jesus, because He has the words of eternal life and He breaths them into us, that we may live

today and on the day of the resurrection of all flesh, just as Lazarus lived.

“Behold, your king is coming to you”. Jesus came to be our Savior, and so He rode to the cross of Good Friday to rescue and deliver us. He comes today in the means of grace to give us forgiveness, life, and salvation, as the words and promises of God declare. And, He promises, “Surely I am coming soon” (Re 22:20). He will come again in all of His glory on the last day, to rescue us from all the threatening perils of our sins and take us in body and soul together to heaven to live with Him there. That’s a promise that is true!

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