

Sermon Transcript for the First Sunday of Advent, November 28, 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right, so we are in the season of Advent, and really, we've been in sort of the season for a while now, because Advent, of course, means the coming, or the event, kind of the advent, the coming of our King. So when we think about the coming of our King, you notice that the last Sunday of the church here, and actually probably the two Sundays before that really begin to focus upon the last things, the coming of our Savior. And so, partially because Advent used to be a slightly longer season, much like the season of Lent, about seven weeks or so. For whatever reason in history, it got shortened down. So we got the last Sundays to talk about the end of the times. Then we got the Sundays of Advent, which in some ways, talk about Jesus coming His first time, but also, we have this mixture of be prepared for Him to come again in His glory. But all of this is wrapped up into a connection between what's prophesied in the Old Testament, and then what is fulfilled in the New Testament. So we're going to see a lot during this Advent season of specific fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy, because those are the means by which people were supposed to recognize, "A-ha, there is the chosen one. There is the one who is to be called the Lord is our righteousness. There is the one who is going to crush the head of the serpent". We're going to see how these prophecies are fulfilled.

So we have Jesus coming into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. Now, again, we've said this before, but the king of glory, the almighty God of the universe, the king of Israel, you would think would come on a creature, something a little bit more impressive than a donkey, or the colt of a donkey, even. Not even a full-grown donkey, but the child of a full-grown donkey. It seems kind of ridiculous. If you've ever been around a donkey, or tried to ride one, your feet hang down, and they practically almost touch the ground when you're riding on it. It's not really a most graceful creature, either. They're pretty stubborn, they're hard to manage, and yet, this is the beast upon which our king comes.

Now, part of that is because of the prophet who spoke of the coming of the king, riding on a donkey. This is connected then also to the event of David and David being the quintessential king of Israel. Everything that comes afterwards, as far as the kingship is concerned, is connected with David. We have the son of David, who is coming, the king of Israel, and yet He is greater than David and everything else. As they say, "Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." Now, part of the reason they knew this was the son of David is the means by which He was entering the city. Because David, when he went to claim his throne in Israel, did almost the exact same thing. He rode in on a beast of burden, but his was a mule, not a donkey. Those that look at the Old Testament and say, "Well, obviously, Scripture got it wrong because it says a donkey, and yet David rode in on a mule." Well, the reason David rode in on a mule was, he was not the fulfillment. He was almost, he was a precursor. He was a hint of things to come, but he was not the fulfillment. The true king of Israel would come in, riding on a donkey, and that was Jesus Christ. So when they saw Jesus coming in, riding on a donkey, they recognized this was the one who had been promised all those many years ago. So they praise Him, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," which reflects in our theme for this Sunday. If you look at the front of your bulletin, you have got Ad Te Levavi, which is the reason for this Sunday. It's to you, oh Lord, I lift up my soul, so Ad Te Levavi is to you, I lift up.

In the Palm Sunday reading, we have everybody lifting up their hands and their hearts, and you might say their souls to the coming of the king. They're excited that He has come. "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." It's excitement. It's thrilling. It's anticipation for the glory and majesty that is to come, because as Jeremiah prophesied, "He would come and He would gather all the people together, and they would no longer say the Lord who brought us out of the land of Egypt, but who brought us from all over the world, and they shall dwell in their own land." Everybody in Israel is hoping that God will finally let them live in peace in their own land. They're looking forward to this coming, this coming when the king will deal wisely, not as most of the kings did, foolishly and selfishly, chasing after other gods, and their own wellbeing. But they're looking for this king who will execute justice and righteousness in the land, and a place in a time where Israel will dwell securely. Now you can see the excitement of people. Finally, we're going to dwell securely in the land.

But again, remember that idea of prophecy that speaks of the fulfillment, first off the fulfillment later on, and then the fulfillment finally when Jesus comes. So when it says that the Lord will bring the people, not just from Egypt, but from all the countries, Jeremiah is writing right before the Babylonian captivity. Israel is going to be taken to the north, and to the east, and they're going to be refugees once more in the land of Babylon. Jeremiah is prophesying that God will bring them back to Israel, which He did 40 years later as He promised. But it wasn't just enough to bring them back to Israel at that time, He's also promising that He is going to unite the people. No longer will they be chasing after the false gods that they constantly ended up doing in the Old Testament, but they will focus on and worship the one true God. That person will come, that ruler will come that will unite Israel. Notice it's the people of Israel, versus the offspring of the house of Israel. See, the people of Israel, God brought the people, the ethnic people of Israel out of Egypt, and brought them to the promised land. He brought the ethnic people out of Babylon back to the promised land. But here, He says, it's more than just the ethnic people of Israel, but He will lead the offspring of the house of Israel. We know that we are called the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the children of Israel, the children of David, because we believe in the promise that was given to them. We are now the offspring of the house of Israel because we have been chosen by God, that God is our ruler, and our king. See, Christ, when He came to this earth, came to rule not just a nation and an ethnic group, but He came to rule the hearts and minds of all, to restore our souls from the bondage of sin that consumes all of us, and by which we are trapped. He will lead us that we might dwell safely in our own land. The land is the kingdom of God, which is not a physical place, but it is a place wherever the people of God gather together and dwell.

So we already are that fulfillment right here and right now, because of Jesus coming and dwelling on this earth, but we also look forward to when He comes again with glory, because in this land, we still have trouble. We still have trial. We still have tribulation. We still have death, war, famine, and rumors of war. All of that is still around. We still have unrighteousness and unfairness in this world, but He has come to give us hope of a future, and that time is coming. As Paul says in Romans, "It's time for us to wake from our sleep." You hear that theme of being awake, being ready, being prepared for the coming of the king. See, when the Israelites praised God to the highest when Jesus came into Israel, it wasn't more than a couple of days later, when they were shouting, "Crucify, crucify," because they were ready for a king, but they didn't know what this king was supposed to do. They were looking for an earthly ruler, at least many of them were, and so when He didn't take His rightful place on the throne of Israel, a lot of people got disillusioned because they weren't prepared for what God was actually doing.

We need to be prepared, as well. God is not going to create peace on this earth. He's not going to come and rule America or rule the world, as the rightful earthly ruler. It's not going to happen. We're still going to have wars and rumors of war this side of His second coming. But He has come to give us peace, so that we might then spread the kingdom and draw the people from the north and all over the place, the children of the house of Israel, draw them into the church. And how do we do that? By loving each other, by loving one another, by being gracious and merciful, by forgiving each other our faults, by doing no wrong to our neighbor, by being a light on a hill, because that is how the kingdom of God is spread. That is how the dwelling of the Lord is created. It is through the witness of you and me of the love of God for us, which then reflects into the love of God for our neighbor.

And so, as we celebrate and anticipate the Advent of our king, remembering His first coming, it's not enough just to remember He came in the manger, but to remember why. He came in the manger, to live His life like us, to take our place, and die on the cross, and then to give us the hope and the promise that because of that death, our death is nothing to be feared, and we will be with Him, and His kingdom will come, and we will live with Him forever. The Advent of our king that we are looking forward to, is the advent of everlasting life with Him.

Be awake, be ready, and love one another, so that you might be ready to sing with raised hand and raised soul, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

May that grace, and mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.