

The First Sunday in Advent

Hymns: 69, 58, 70, 75

The INTROIT

(Ps. 25:1-3a,4)

P: Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;

C: O my God, I trust in Thee.

P: Let me not be ashamed;

C: let not mine enemies triumph over me.

P: Yea, let none that wait on Thee; be ashamed.

C: Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths.

(The “Gloria in Excelsis” is omitted during the Penitential Season of Advent)

The COLLECT

Stir up, we beseech Thee, Thy power, O Lord, and come, that by Thy protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Thy mighty deliverance; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 33:14-18 (NKJV)

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

In those days and at that time

I will cause to grow up to David

A Branch of righteousness;

He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

In those days Judah will be saved,

And Jerusalem will dwell safely.

And this is the name by which she will be called:

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

For thus says the LORD: “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.”

The GRADUAL

(Ps.25:3-4;85:7)

P: All they that wait on Thee shall not be ashamed, O Lord.

C: Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Alleluia! Alleluia!

P: Show us Thy mercy, O Lord,

C: and grant us Thy salvation. Alleluia!

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Psalm 25:6)

P: Hallelujah! Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies:

C: for they have been ever of old. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Matthew 21:1-9 (NKJV)

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

"Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"

Matthew 21:1-9 — "Lowly and Sitting on a Donkey"

INTRODUCTION

- I. THE LORD HAS NEED OF THEM
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The First Sunday in Advent

Hymns: 69, 58, 70, 75

Matthew 21:1-9 — “Lowly and Sitting on a Donkey”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is the First Sunday in Advent and the sermon text is the Gospel reading appointed for this day, Matthew 21:1-9:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”

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

INTRODUCTION

The season of Advent is always hard for me. It is hard for me to put aside the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Yet doing so serves a wonderful purpose. This heavenly anthem of the angels is given to the shepherds and through them to the world on the night of the birth of the Lord Jesus, the Savior born in the city of David. As we prepare for the blessed celebration of the Christ Mass, the absence of this beloved anthem reminds us that the Old Testament saints lived in a period of expectant waiting. The promise that was given concerning the woman’s Seed and then Abraham’s Seed and then David’s Seed was a promise of both now and not yet. The salvation that was already established and worked by the Word and will of God from eternity, was still to be fulfilled in time. Like the Church of the Old Testament, we also await the final redemption of the sons of God when the Lord Jesus comes in the fullness of His glory to end the corruption of the present evil age. Until that day, even though the first Advent of our Lord has come and He has fulfilled the work of redemption in His own body, we join the Old Testament saints in awaiting the day of the resurrection and the fullness of the redemption in our own bodies.

Thus, in this season of Advent in the Church Year, we look for the approaching day of the Lord in the fulfillment of all of God’s promises. Today we return to the days of looking toward the coming of our Lord to His people, Lowly and Sitting on a Donkey.

I. THE LORD HAS NEED OF THEM

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

This statement is an amazing revelation of the LORD our God. **“The LORD has need of them.”** What on earth does the LORD need with anything? He is the almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He has but to speak and whatever He wills comes into being. Why would the LORD have need of a donkey and her colt?

He needs them for our sake. He needs them in order to come to us in a way that we can receive Him. It is the same with the man who stands as the servant of the Word and with the water of Baptism and with the wine of the Holy Supper of the Holy Communion. The LORD needs these as the means by which He comes to us. He needs these because of our frail condition. He needs these so that He may approach us without destroying us by His glory and might.

Truly He is as Solomon proclaimed at the celebration of the Temple and as Isaiah later declared.

And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: (1 Kings 8:23)

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. (Isaiah 45:21-25)

Truly, there is no God like the LORD our God. Who but the LORD would humble Himself to be born of a virgin, to be made in the form of the creation in order to save that which He created? Who but the LORD would humble Himself to be condemned and tortured and crucified for the sake of those who rose up against Him in rebellion and made themselves His enemies? Who but the LORD would seek to save rather than to seek vengeance against such wicked people?

So it is that Matthew records for us the words of our Lord, **“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them.’”**

Yes, for our sake, the Lord has need of them.

II. LOWLY AND SITTING ON A DONKEY

Matthew further records:

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

What sort of king does such a thing? On a donkey? Kings ride in parades that make manifest their power and glory. Kings ride on magnificent stallions that prance with high-stepping pride. Kings ride in highly adorned chariots. Today the rulers ride in limousines with bullet proof glass and they ride in high-flying jet planes that serve as command centers.

But the LORD God almighty comes to His people Lowly and sitting on a donkey.

A donkey is a beast of burden. It is not fast. It is not valiant. It is not glorious. It is not sleek and beautiful. It is a meek animal that is used to carry a burden for others.

Such is the way of the LORD our God. Such is the way of the King of kings and LORD of lords. He comes in meekness, riding upon the backs of sinful preachers and poured out in simple water to be applied to wash the humble and contrite in heart and in simple bread and wine to strengthen and restore the weak sinners who have no strength of their own.

The LORD comes in meekness to the meek. He comes in lowliness to the lowly. The praise that He seeks is not grandiose celebrations but quiet repentance. He comes to bring forth a humble confession of unworthiness in order that He may bestow His worthiness. He comes to coax from sinful hearts the confession of a broken spirit so that He may pour His blood of righteousness into their spirits in the common form of wine to restore the spirits and hearts of the broken and contrite. He comes in a form that does not terrify but comforts the weak and lowly. He comes in a form that requires nothing from those who receive Him, nothing but the faith that He bestows through Baptism with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And this Spirit of God comes in such a way that ordinarily no one knows it except the person who receives Him. He comes into the heart of even the lowliest little baby and regenerates the soul to be holy and pure in the image of the almighty Creator.

The LORD of glory, the King of kings, comes in such meek and lowly means that He is easily ignored and even mocked and spurned. He comes with comfort and blessing rather than splendor and might. He comes in this way so that we who would otherwise be driven away by His glory may approach and commune with Him and receive the benefits that He comes to bestow upon us.

Yes, as dear Matthew records, all this is to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets.

III. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the

**multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:
“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the
LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”**

The result is that those who receive Him in the meek and gentle manner by which He has ordained that we receive Him cry out with the cry, **“Hosanna in the highest!”** Yes, Hosanna, which means, **“Save Now!”** The LORD of glory comes to us in meekness through ordinary means and we receive salvation in the highest! According to the very highest court the judgment of Salvation is pronounced. This is what the LORD accomplishes by coming to us according to the lowly means that He has ordained.

Yet, as we observe with the multitudes who received Jesus as He came to Jerusalem on this donkey, their songs of praise were short lived. **“Hosanna in the highest”** turned to **“Crucify! Crucify! We have no king but Caesar!”**

We observe the same among those who claim to praise the LORD today. Do any of us truly seek and desire the One who comes to us lowly and sitting on a donkey? Do any of us truly want the One who comes to us by means of a sinful vessel who must receive from her Lord the salvation that He is coming to bring? Do any of us truly want the One who comes by water and blood?

No. We want to come to the cute little baby in the stall, whom the angels praise. We want to seek the babe who was honored with gifts from the Magi. We want to come to the stall and imagine ourselves to be faithful servants of the King. We do not want to set aside the “Gloria in Excelsis” and the “Hosanna in the Highest.” We want to build churches and fill them with people. We want to see the large crowds gather and sing praises to God most High. We want to show glorious successes in mission activity and in evangelism outreach.

But the Lord who says, **“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”** (Matthew 18:20) is spurned. The Lord who promises to be found in the pure administration of the means of grace is ignored. No, we want a Lord who shows Himself with great success. We want a Lord who manifests Himself through large gatherings where His praises impress the world. We want a Lord who is glorified through our good works and acts of love.

But He does not make Himself known in these ways, He comes to us Lowly and sitting on a donkey. He comes to us through the preaching of the Word that is preached without compromise and without pomp. He comes to us through Word attached to water and bread and wine. He comes to us in meek and lowly ways that the world mocks and ignores. Even most who call themselves Christians do not honor these as the cause for singing “Hosanna in the highest.”

Nevertheless, this is how He comes. This is why this text is appointed for this first Sunday in Advent, to bring us down from our grandiose perspectives to be made to see ourselves as we really are. Then we will rejoice in the meekness of our Lord who comes to us in such lowly fashion. Then we will bow down and confess Him as the one who comes in the name of the Lord, bringing the gentle salvation that He alone can work for us. Then we do sing with heart and soul, “Hosanna in the highest!” as we return to the confession of the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit and as we humbly eat the bread of unity in Christ’s body and drink the wine of the cup of the New Testament in His blood for the remission of sins. Then truly

salvation shall be the song of our hearts, salvation that fills our meek souls so that we cannot help but sing Hosanna, Save Now! For this is what He comes to give us. His glory will be ours in that great day of His second coming, but only after we have learned to know His meekness by which salvation is ours.

CONCLUSION

Truly His meekness is cause for rejoicing. His meekness is the salvation that we desire. Truly this season of Advent is a season for rejoicing in the meekness of the Lord our God, who willingly, mercifully, graciously, and lovingly humbled Himself to be born of the virgin, to be incarnated as one of us, to be made to be sin for us, to suffer and to die in our stead, to be raised again with our flesh still with Him, to stand as our mediator and intercessor until the end of this evil age, to come again in the fullness of His glory to bring the evil of this age to an everlasting end, and to fulfill the redemption of our bodies so that we may live with Him and rejoice with Him everlastingly in the freedom of the purity and holiness of His Holy Communion.

Therefore we are gathered again this blessed First Sunday in Advent to bow humbly before the King who comes to us lowly and sitting on a donkey. We bow before the font of our salvation, confessing our sins that we may receive His merciful absolution and be called forward to partake of His body and blood in the fullness of His Holy Communion. Behold, this is our King, who comes to us in all meekness, so that we may receive Him without fear and without judgment. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.