

# THE KING IS COMING

November 29, 2009

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Old Testament Lesson; Jeremiah 31:31-34

Epistle Lesson; Romans 13:11-14

Gospel Lesson; Matthew 21:1-9

Sermon Text; Matthew 21:1-9

The scripture lesson that we look at today, this first Sunday in Advent, is taken from Matthew 21, verses 1-19. Somebody asked me this week, “What are you preaching on for the first Sunday in Advent?”

Well, I said, “I am preaching about Palm Sunday.”

And they said, “What! It’s Advent... Why are you preaching about Palm Sunday?”

So, let's listen to this Palm Sunday text, taken from Matthew 21:1-19.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and

Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

These are Your Words, Heavenly Father. Lead us in the way of truth. Your Word is truth.

Amen

In 1972 a commission of Lutherans called the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship gathered together and very meticulously, methodically, with deep theology, picked out some scripture readings for every Sunday of the church year, for what was called the Three Year Series. So, it was called the ILCW, Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship Lectionary or, series for three years. These theologians sat down and said,

“What would be a good Old Testament Lesson (for example) for the first Sunday in Advent?”

“What would be a good Gospel Lesson (that is a lesson from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John)?”

“What would be a good Epistle Lesson (that is one of the letters in the New Testament)?”

For every Sunday of the church year, for a series of three years, they chose scripture readings, for what we call liturgical churches to follow. Those readings take us through the life of Christ, and also the work of Christ in us. And they do that, during the course of an entire year. Much of Christendom has used the ILCW Series, since 1972. Here at Holy Cross, as long as I have been here, and even prior to the time I was here, we have used the ILCW Series during worship. And so, the readings we have had for the first Sunday in Advent, for the 17 years that I have been here at Holy Cross, always

dealt with Jesus coming on the Last Day in judgment.

But, today we have a different scripture reading for the first Sunday in Advent. Pastor Tweit and I sat down, earlier this fall, and I said to Pastor Tweit, “You know, I have been preaching on those ILCW texts for the 22 years that I have been in the ministry. I would like to use some new texts to preach on.”

And so, Pastor Tweit agreed. We decided to preach, (starting today, now, through the course of this entire church year), on a new Lectionary (as it is called). It is called the Historic Series. The Historic Series takes us way back to the year 800 AD. This is a series of readings, Old Testament readings, Gospel readings, Epistle readings, that again take us through the life of Christ and then also through what Christ does in our hearts, during the course of a year. These are readings that were used for the past 1,200 years by the church. And, many churches still use these readings, today. These are readings that, if you can remember before 1972, most likely you grew up on. If you went to a Liturgical church, like a Lutheran church, these are the texts that you grew up on, Sunday, after Sunday, after Sunday. They are the texts your parents grew up on, your grandparents, and your great grandparents grew up on. These are texts that were preached on by all of the great liturgical preachers for the last 1,000 years.

And so, here it is the first Sunday in Advent, and the first Sunday of the church year! I was really eager to open up this text and preach on a new Advent scripture reading that I had never preached on, before! I looked to see what the Gospel Lesson was and it said, “Matthew 21:1-9”. I flipped open my Bible to Matthew 21:1-9 and noticed that it was the Palm Sunday text! I thought, “*Oh! I must have looked up the wrong Bible verse. This is the first Sunday in Advent. It is not Palm Sunday.*” So, I rechecked. And sure enough, for the past 1,200 years, on the first Sunday in Advent, the church has looked at Palm Sunday!

Now, what does Palm Sunday have to do with getting ready for Jesus' coming as our King at His birth, on Christmas and getting ready for Jesus to come again in glory, someday?

So, I began to do some research. I thought, *“You know what? I am going to see how other pastors dealt with this text.”* And since this text has been used for the past 1,000 years, I could read the sermons on this text, from all of the great preachers. And so, I pulled out Martin Luther and read what he wrote about this text. I pulled out a man by the name of C. F. W. Walther and read about what he wrote on this text. I pulled out a man by the name of John Gerhardt and read what he wrote on this text. I also looked at one of the great preachers from our synod, and what he wrote on this text.

They all came to this basic concept. I want you to think about this concept. **Just as Jesus entered Jerusalem in a very humble way on Palm Sunday and installed Himself as King, so Jesus must enter your heart in a very humble way and install Himself as King in your heart.** Until that happens, you will not be able to celebrate His birth with great joy, and, you will not look forward to His second coming again some day.

And so, what I want to do, (since I spent a lot of time reading from some of these great pastors), I just want to summarize tidbits from four of these great pastors and how they dealt with this particular scripture reading.

First of all, I want to look at a man by the name of C. F. W. Walther. I consider him, probably, the greatest preacher that ever walked the soil of the United States of America. He lived back in the 1860's. He was the president of the Missouri Synod, at that time. He looked at this text from the Gospel of Matthew and here is part of what he did in his sermon. He asked this question to his listeners.

**“What did Jerusalem do  
to prompt Jesus to enter into Jerusalem,  
as their humble King?”**

What did Jerusalem do? Did they invite Him to come as their King? Did they send a request to Him? “Jesus, come and be our King?” Did they prepare a mighty steed for Him to ride in on? The answer is,

**“Jerusalem did not do anything  
to prompt Jesus to come and be their King.”**

In fact, quite to the contrary. Jesus stood over Jerusalem one day and said, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I would have gathered you together, like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But, you would not.”

Jerusalem did not do anything to prompt Jesus to come and be King. Jesus, of His own will and His own choice, determined to enter Jerusalem and establish Himself as King. He was the one who directed His disciples to go and find the donkey and the donkey's colt. He was the one who got on the donkey. He was the one who rode into Jerusalem on that donkey, in a humble way. He is the one who chose to install Himself as King. And, He chose to do it in a very humble way. He chose not to do it on mighty steed, on a mighty snorting horse, as many kings would do. But, He chose to do it in the humblest way, on a beast of burden, and on the colt of a beast of burden.

Having explained the answer to his question, “What did Jerusalem do to prompt Jesus to enter? Jerusalem did not do anything. Jesus entered of His own will,” then Walther asked another question.

**“What have you done  
to prompt Jesus to enter your heart?”**

The answer from scripture is nothing.

**“Nothing.”**

There is nothing that you and I can do. We cannot prompt Jesus to enter our heart by saying, “*Jesus, why don't you come and be King in my heart? I have my heart all ready. I have it all prepared and*

*now I want you to come and be my King.”*

The Bible describes our heart in quite a contrary way. The Bible describes our heart in a way that says,

**“You were dead in your trespasses and sins.”**

Jesus said, *“You didn't choose me. I chose you.”* And so, there is nothing we can do to prompt Jesus to enter our hearts. But Jesus, in His mercy and grace, has chosen to enter your heart, and He has chosen to do it in the most humble of ways.

**How is it that Jesus has entered your heart?**

**Jesus has entered your heart**

**through His humble Word and Sacrament.**

When was it that Jesus entered most of our hearts? It was way back when we were little infants. Think of the humility of our Savior, Jesus. At your baptism, when you were a little infant, He entered in your heart. And He brought you to faith, to believe in Him as your Savior from sin.

**“From the mouths of infants,  
Jesus has ordained praise.”**

Every day, through the Word, as it is preached and taught, and through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as we hear that gracious message that our sins are forgiven, Jesus takes one step deeper into our heart, and strengthens our faith in Him, as our Savior. That prepares us to welcome Him when He is born at Christmas time. That is how C. F. W. Walther dealt with this text.

Then, there was a great preacher, of course, by the name of Martin Luther. Martin Luther was a master at looking at pronouns in scripture readings. So, the pronouns that Martin Luther really looked at in this text are the prophecy that was spoken by Zechariah. Zechariah said,

**“Say to the Daughter of Zion,**

**'See, your king comes to you, meek and lowly.'”**

Luther concentrated on those pronouns 'your' and 'you'.

**“Your king  
comes to you.”**

But, before looking at those pronouns, let's look at 'the Daughter of Zion'. Who is the Daughter of Zion? Literally, the Daughter of Zion, if you would go back into the Old Testament, the Daughters of Zion were the virgin, young women who lived in Zion, or the city of Jerusalem (Zion is just another word for the city of Jerusalem).

They were the young, virgin women who lived in the city of Jerusalem. And, whenever an enemy would attack the city of Jerusalem, try to knock down those fortified walls, get into the city, and capture the city Jerusalem, one of the things that those enemies were trying to take as plunder were those virgin daughters of Jerusalem, the Daughters of Zion. They wanted to take them, ravage them, and they wanted to misuse them. They wanted to make them their slave wives, in many instances. And so, those Daughters of Zion, back in the Old Testament, longed for a strong and mighty king who could protect them, defend them, and keep them safe from all enemies. That is what they longed for.

Our scripture reading says, **“Say to Jerusalem, 'Rejoice, oh Daughter of Zion! Your King has come to you, meek and lowly.”** Luther used that to explain how you, like those Daughters of Zion, have a great enemy that wants to ravage you, misuse you, and abuse you in the worst possible way.

**That enemy is the devil.**

The devil would love to drag you into his kingdom and take you to Hell, where he would ravage and abuse you, forever and for eternity. But, rejoice Oh Daughter of Zion, your King comes to you! And he focused on the pronouns, 'your' king and 'you'.

Every one of us in this room should find great comfort that our King comes to us meek and lowly. Our Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem in the humblest way, on a donkey. He was prepared to humble Himself for you even further. He was prepared, in all meekness and

in all lowliness, to take your sin, your shame, your guilt, your punishment, and go to the cross. There He purchased you. He redeemed you. And, He defeated the worst enemies you have – your sin, Hell, death, and Satan.

As we look at this text, “Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey’” Luther says that until we understand that, we will not rejoice at the birth of our Savior at Christmastime.

**“Rejoice greatly, Oh, Daughter of Zion,  
your king comes to you meek and lowly.”**

Then there was a great pastor in our synod. His name was Norman A. Madson, Sr. He has since, now, died and gone to Heaven. And, sometimes when people would go around and hear other pastors and they would say, “Boy, that was a good sermon.” Then, people would compare and say, “Well, was it as good as Madson?”

Apparently, Madson was quite the preacher. Anyway, he wrote a sermon on this text. One of the ways he dealt with it was this.

**Just as Jesus entered Jerusalem,**

**so,**

**Jesus is now standing at the door of your heart.**

In Revelations, chapter 3, verse 20 Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

And so, Jesus, today, stands at the door and knocks at the door of your heart. For many of us, Jesus is already there. He has already entered and by faith we believe. But, Madson was particularly pointing to the people in the congregation who may still have barred that door shut and have not let Jesus in. He said to them, “Don't be too proud. Don't be too proud to let Jesus come into your heart.”

And then he said, “Until you recognize the severity and the depth of your sin, once you recognize that, it does not matter how great you are. You won't care how humbled you are to let Jesus into your

heart.” He said, “Look at the Canaanite woman. She did not care about her own personal greatness anymore, at all. She did not even mind that Jesus called her a dog, so long as she knew that Jesus was her Savior. Look at Zaccheus. He did not care about his personal greatness, anymore. He did not care if everyone in his town murmured against him, so long as Jesus had come to his house and Jesus was his Savior.” Madson said, “Look at St. Paul. He did not even care that he called himself the chief of sinners. He was willing to be that humbled, just so long as he knew that Jesus had come to be his Savior.”

And so, the same is true with each of us. Until we recognize the depth of our own sin, we will bar Jesus out. So, look at your sin. And then, recognize that Jesus, the great King has come and humbled Himself to save you. Cling to Him as your King.

Then, the last pastor I looked at who wrote on this text was a pastor by the name of John Gerhardt. Most of you probably have not heard of him. Actually, he is considered one of the great Lutheran theologians of all time. He lived in the early 1600's in Germany. At age 24 he already was a professor of theology at the University of Wittenburg. He was considered such a great Lutheran theologian, that pretty much every university in Europe tried to get him to come and be a professor at their university. Already at the age of 24 he had written several, wonderful, prayer books. These prayer books really went into depth. He must have been a young man who really understood sin and temptation, and been through quite a few temptations of his own, because these prayer books deal deeply with all of the temptations we have (and I mean every temptation you can imagine). They deal with how Jesus is our Savior, who has forgiven us and gives us the strength to fight against those temptations.

Anyway, John Gerhardt wrote a sermon on this text. One of the interesting little points he dealt on was this - He focused on the little colt that Jesus rode on. He said, here is this stubborn, little colt that

no one had ever ridden on, before. But, Jesus takes it as His own. He is not too proud to ride on this humble, little colt of a donkey. Then, Gerhardt compared that to your heart. Your heart is something that is unmanageable. It is something that nobody is able to ride on as king. The Bible says,

“The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.  
Who can know it?”

The Bible says,

“Every inclination of man's heart is evil,  
even from his youth.”

Jesus said,

“Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander and the like.”

All of those things come out of the heart. We are not able to manage our own hearts. We are not able to ride on our own hearts, and control them, nor is anybody else. And yet, our Lord Jesus, our Lord Jesus, has managed to take these hearts that no one else can ride on, these hearts full of sin. And, He is not too proud to sit on your heart as King of your heart. He is not too proud to have died for all of your sins. He is not too proud to have forgiven all of your sins. He is not too proud to have changed your heart, so that now, you want to be ridden by Him. You want Him to direct you where to go and how to live. And so, let's commit to living for our King.

So, Christmas is coming. Let's have hearts in which Jesus has entered in a humble way, where He rules as King.

Amen