

THE THREE-FOLD COMING OF OUR LORD
Sermon for the 1st Sunday in Advent, 2017

Mark 11:1-10

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Mark 11:1-10: ¹ **When they were approaching Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples. ² He told them, “Go into the village ahead of you! Just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied up, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here! ³ If anybody asks you, ‘Why are you doing that?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it’! Then that person will promptly send it back here.”**

⁴ **They went and found a colt tied at a door-way, outside in the street, and began to untie it. ⁵ Some of the people standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”**

⁶ **They answered them just as Jesus had told them, and the people let them go. ⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, put their cloaks over it, and He sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the fields and spread them on the road. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed Him kept shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In the Sundays leading up to the end of the church year, we once again heard that not everyone will enjoy the revealed presence of the Lord forever. Indeed, some will be cast into the eternal outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.¹

As we begin this new church year, I want us to focus on the three-fold coming of our Lord.

¹ Matthew 13:42

First of all, consider how He came to earn forgiveness for us with His holy life and His sacrificial death. Second, consider how He now comes to deliver that forgiveness to us in Word and Sacrament, and finally, third, to consider how He will come to destroy this sinful world and create a new heaven and earth. On that day, He will raise all the dead and our mortal bodies will put on immortality.² He will send those who rejected His forgiveness to eternal fire, while for those who received forgiveness through the Holy Spirit's gift of faith will be left behind to enjoy Christ's presence *forever*.

The fact that forgiveness forms the central theme for all three comings of the Christ also reminds us that it is we who need forgiveness, for we are the sinners. There would be no need for the three-fold coming of Christ if it were not for our sin. If it were not for our sin, God would have revealed Himself openly from the days of Adam and Eve in Eden until this very day.

Nevertheless, we did sin and God veiled His presence so that His glory would not lash out against our sin and destroy us. When the time was perfect,³ God took our humanity into Himself and dwelt among us in the person of the Christ, the Christ who came, who is coming, and who will come again. During this season we repent of our sin, the sin that caused God to hide His presence from us. Thus, our joy is restrained during this time that we look for His coming.

The name of this season comes from Latin. Since Latin was the universal language when the Church began celebrating this season, it was called *Tempus Adventus*. This means the season of coming. We call it Advent.

Today's Gospel is Mark's account of the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem. **When they were approaching Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples. ² He told them, "Go into the village ahead of you! Just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied up, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here!" ³ If anybody asks you, "Why are you doing that?" say, "The Lord needs it"! Then that person will promptly send it back here."**

² 1 Corinthians 15:53

³ Galatians 4:4

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⁶ They answered them just as Jesus had told them, and the people let them go. ⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, put their cloaks over it, and He sat on it.

Jesus is riding into Jerusalem to offer Himself up as the propitiation for all our sin. This was not the first time Jesus had come to Jerusalem since He began His ministry. The gospel of John mentions three other times Jesus had visited Jerusalem (2:13; 5:1; 7:10). But this was the last time, and Jesus knew what He faced. Three times He had explicitly told His disciples that He would suffer and die there and on the third day rise again (Mark 8:31, 32; 9:31; 10:32–34). So He went, ready to carry out the Father’s will and to redeem mankind by His suffering and death. The disciples had confessed Him as Christ, although they did not fully understand what that meant.

It is part of God’s nature to come and be with His people. We can see the coming of God throughout Holy Scripture. From the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis we see God’s desire to be with us as He came to be with Adam in Eden, to show Adam that all of creation was his to care for as God’s representative here on earth. Even the act of creation shows God’s ‘hands on’ attitude as He formed Adam from the dust of the earth.

How God’s heart must have broken when sin entered the world! How much His heart must have ached when He came to His beloved people and they were afraid of Him! How sad it must have been for Him when Adam and Eve did not confess their sin, but blamed others instead. The woman blamed the serpent, and Adam had the audacity to blame God! We cannot imagine how God grieved at the terror Adam and Eve had in His presence because of their sin.

Ever since that day in Eden, humanity has been afraid of and even hated God. The last thing our sinful nature wants is for God to come to us. Even though God has nothing but love for us, our sin and its guilt produce terror and hatred of Him.

Yet down through the centuries, God continued to come in love to His people, but always in a way that was hidden so that His holy presence did not overwhelm them. He came in tabernacle and Ark and eventually in the temple - always there, but always hidden. Only a sacrifice allowed people into the presence of God and

even then, it was only one person who could enter into the Holy of Holies and then only once a year. God's holy presence was too much for our sinful condition.

Finally, when the fullness of time had come, God came in a temple that was not made with stone, but was made of human flesh and blood. The Holy Spirit performed a miracle and the Son of God came in a new way in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

In today's Gospel, we see God coming in order to fulfil His mission to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for all our sin. Jesus is riding into Jerusalem to die. God in His temple of flesh and blood is coming to His temple made of stone - God in His temple of humanness is coming to the temple of His hiddenness. In His temple of flesh and blood, Christ will die in order to fulfil the promise of the sacrifices made on the altar in the temple of His hidden presence.

As the Son of God rode into Jerusalem on that day, the Passover Pilgrims shouted His praise. **“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”** It is very likely that few if any of them understood the full meaning of Christ's coming. Although their songs spoke of coming in the name of the Lord and the kingdom of David, they did not understand what that meant. They quite rightly called Jesus their Messiah, but they would not know what that meant until the coming week was over. For Jesus, God, in the flesh, had come to die. He had come to Jerusalem to offer Himself up as the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world. His death on the cross was the culmination of His first coming.

The Son of God had taken on human flesh in order to take our place. He had come to Jerusalem to experience the full guilt of our sin and take the punishment for that guilt. He had come to remove the guilt that caused our terror at His coming. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that Sunday so that on that Friday He could suffer and die on a Roman cross and so make the full payment for the sins of the world.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross changed the temple of stone as well. Inside that temple was a curtain that hid God from the people. When Christ conquered sin, death, and the devil with His sacrifice on the cross, the curtain of the temple was

orn in two, from top to bottom.⁴ God was no longer hidden from His people. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say, “*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ,*” (1 Corinthians 6:15) and “*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?*” (1 Corinthians 6:19). With the sacrifice of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith, God now makes His temple in us. The temple of stone became unnecessary because God lives among us in a whole new way.

Even as God lives with us, He still comes to us. He comes into our ears as we hear His Word. He comes into our mouths in His flesh and blood as we eat and drink the bread and the wine of His table.

As Jesus comes into us by ear, we hear Him bring forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. As the pastor speaks the word of absolution, we hear Jesus enter our ears with the forgiveness He earned for us on the cross. As the pastor reads the Word of Scripture and preaches on that Word, Jesus enters our ears to give us the confidence, comfort, and reassurance of the promise of the Christ.

As Jesus comes into us by mouth, we eat the very flesh that He sacrificed for us on the cross and drink the very blood that He shed for us on the cross. However, this flesh and blood are not dead things. For the Son of God did not remain dead and buried in the tomb, but He came to life. He rose from the dead. The flesh and blood He gives to us are not just the flesh and blood of crucifixion, but they are also the flesh and blood of resurrection. In this sacrament He comes to us with the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

God will continue to come to us until the day of His last coming. On that day He will reveal Himself to all flesh. On that day He will raise all the dead.

He will send away those who are still terrified of Him - those who still retain their guilt because they refused the gift of His coming, His forgiveness. They will never experience His coming again. Instead, they will experience the eternal presence of the holy, righteous, wrath of God as they suffer the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.⁵

⁴ Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38

⁵ Matthew 25:41

On the other hand, those who received the gift of His coming, those who believe in Him will rejoice on that day. He will always be with them and they will always be with Him. They shall enjoy the presence of His grace forever.

Dear friends, consider God and His coming during this Advent. Consider His coming at Christmas, but don't limit your consideration just to Christmas. Consider the love that God shows in His coming, in that even while sin causes terror and hatred, He continues to come in love by means of His Word and Sacraments. Consider how He came to save us with His suffering, death, and resurrection. Consider how He now comes in Word and Sacrament. Consider how He will come to dwell with His people in joy. Consider the blessings that He once gave when He came, the blessings that He gives as He now comes, and the blessings that He will give when He comes again. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Almighty God and Father, we thank and praise You for Your promises of mercy and deliverance, which You have fulfilled in the coming of Your Son Jesus Christ. He is indeed the Light to reveal You to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

As Your faithful people in every age have believed Your Word, grant that we, too, may believe it, and one day inherit Your heavenly promises. As Your people of old looked forward with longing to the coming of the Messiah, grant that we, too, may joyfully welcome Jesus into our hearts, and be saved by Him from the power of sin, Satan, and death.

Lead us by Your Spirit to a deep awareness of our need of repentance. Teach us to hate what is evil and to love what is good. Strengthen us when our enemies try to lead us into sin. Direct our lives in ways that are holy and right, that we may serve and glorify You in all things.

Cause Your saving light to shine in all corners of the earth, that people everywhere may know Your love in Christ Jesus, and join that great number of Your people who say: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Grant peace to the nations of the earth. Look with special favour on our own country, and on all its citizens. Guide all who rule over us, that they may learn to

know You as the only true God, and may seek to do Your will in all things. Frustrate the designs of those who wish to promote such evils as abortion and euthanasia. Forgive our people for their welcoming of same-sex “marriage.”

Bless all who have gathered in Your house today to hear Your precious Word. Grant strength, comfort, and understanding to all those members of this parish who are sick or troubled, to those who are sad and depressed, to those who are enduring hardships, and to all others who are in any bodily or spiritual need. Grant them perseverance, and the joy of Your abiding presence.

Watch over the congregation of Our Redeemer in Forsyth, as they continue to mourn the loss of their pastor. We ask You to raise up for them a pastor to lead them in Word and Sacrament.

Continue to bless our Vicar Jake Zabel, so that in time he may be called and ordained into the ministry, to shepherd and teach Your people.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who has come to deliver us, who has died to save us, and risen to justify us, and who is always alive to intercede for us. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Isaiah 64:1-9

¹ If only You would tear the heavens apart and come down! If only the mountains might quake at Your presence, ² as when fire sets dry twigs ablaze, or when fire causes water to boil! Come down to make Your name known to Your enemies, that the nations may tremble in Your presence! ³ When You did awesome things that we were not expecting, You came down, and the mountains quaked at Your presence. ⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard or perceived with his ears, and no eye

has seen any God except You. You act on behalf of the one who waits for You. ⁵ You have been coming to meet him who gladly does what is right, and those who remember You according to Your ways. Look! You have been angry; we have been sinning against Your ways for a long time. Therefore shall we be saved? ⁶ All of us have become like something that is unclean, and all our righteous actions are like a filthy garment. All of us have withered like a leaf and our wrongdoings carry us away like the wind. ⁷ There is no one who calls on Your Name

or rouses himself to take hold of You. For You have hidden Your face from us, and You have made us melt because of our wrongdoing.⁸ Nevertheless, LORD, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our Potter. All of us are the work of Your hand.⁹ Do not be extremely angry, LORD! Do not remember wrongdoing for ever! Indeed, please look! We are all Your people.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

³ Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ! ⁴ I am always thanking my God for you for the grace of God, which has been given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in Him you have been made rich in every way, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶ just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed in you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any charismatic gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also make you firm until the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God, who has called you into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Mark 11:1-10

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