

# First Sunday in Advent

Hymns: 696, 332, 350, 335, 618, 331.

**Introit: Psalm 80:1-7.**

Listen, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock!

**You, who are enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth.**

before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh!

**Stir up Your strength, and come to save us!**

Restore us, O God, and cause Your face to shine,

**that we may be saved!**

O LORD, God of hosts, how long will You smoulder

**in anger against the prayers of Your people?**

You have fed them with the bread of tears,

**and You have given them a third of a measure of tears to drink.**

You cause us to have strife with our neighbours,

**and our enemies are laughing among themselves.**

**O God of hosts, restore us, and cause Your face to shine, that we may be saved!**

**Collect:** 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; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C Amen.**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 64:1-9.**

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9.**

**Gospel: 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 this morning is written in the book of Mark 11:1-10, which was our gospel reading before.

**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 doorway, 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,  
Peace be with you.

We have entered again the season of Advent. What is this “Advent”? What is it all about? Even some of us who have been Lutherans our whole lives become a little fuzzy on the details of what Advent is and what its purpose is.

Let us see that purpose in the coming of Christ on a donkey. He doesn't come proud and mighty. He is mighty, but He doesn't use His strength. When He spoke to the disciples about the donkeys, He said, “The Lord has need of them.” Think about that. The Lord Almighty in human flesh, the Omnipotent One, needs nothing and no one, least of all a couple of dumb animals. Yet He lowers Himself. He makes Himself weak. Christ comes in humility and meekness.

We should learn to be like Him. We set aside whatever high opinion we hold of our qualities or whatever we think is great about us. We cast away pride and instead see ourselves as we truly are. We are lowly sinners. This is important in Advent because the King is coming. We shouldn't be proud before Him. When He approached Jerusalem, He didn't look like much. Yet the crowds hailed Him and praised His arrival. We should do no less.

But why? Why praise the coming of Christ? Because He comes to save, and all people need the salvation that He brings. Yet if we don't humble ourselves and realize that we are lowly sinners, then we won't feel that we need Him. Maybe those other people need Christ; you know, those bad sinners. We are pretty good people, so we love the coming of Christ, but we don't really need it. Or so the prideful sinful flesh believes.

To combat such attitudes, the Church observes Advent, which is roughly four weeks of restraint. We restrain ourselves by not singing the Hallelujah's. We hold back from the full jubilation of the Christmas celebration. We wait, as Israel waited centuries for the Messiah. We try to wait patiently because it's not Christmas yet, in spite of the decorations we see and the festive songs we hear, and I mean "festive", it seems there are no proper carols any more. We discipline ourselves by waiting, so that we learn to eagerly desire His coming.

But it's hard to wait. It's hard to use discipline and restraint. We, want to break out into joyful carols. That's more fun. We want the full celebration now. This is what the world does. The world rushes ahead and doesn't wait. It grabs what it wants without discipline. So the world so easily loses the true meaning of Christmas, which is that the mighty King comes in humility to save us, lowly sinners.

For this reason, we Christians humble ourselves, and we anticipate His coming. It's hard to anticipate and yearn for something if you do not need it, so we remind ourselves that we are sinners who sorely need this Saviour to be born of the Blessed Virgin.

Of course, Christ is not born this coming Christmas Day. He was born two thousand years ago. So we are anticipating the commemoration of His birth, and the possible second coming. He became Man for our salvation. He took flesh and blood so that He could lay them down in death to pay the penalty for our sins. The Son of David came in the manger just as He came to Jerusalem – in humility. Therefore we are also humble as we yearn for His coming.

He also comes to this House, and we hail Him with the same words the crowd used. “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.” We sing these words as He comes to give His Body and Blood. He approaches here as surely as He approached Jerusalem on a donkey. He came then to give His Body and Blood on the Cross for our sins. The same Body and Blood are given for us today. We anticipate this coming by humbling ourselves. We hunger and thirst for these gifts because we poor sinners need them. If we feel that we are good people who are doing okay, then we'll feel no great need for the Body and Blood. So we eagerly anticipate, in humility.

He also will come on clouds of glory. When that day comes, it will be the best day of all days, and the beginning of endless days of perfection in the new Heaven and new Earth.

But it's hard to wait for that coming. There's so much trouble in the world, - problems in our lives, - pain in our hearts. We want to rush ahead to the unrestrained celebration. We want to skip to the end.

So Advent discipline also teaches us patience in times of difficulty. We trust God's will that He brings the last day at the right time, not according to our feeble wisdom, but His. We wait, and we try to be patient. In the same way the people of Israel waited for the Messiah.

This Lord knows all things. He knew where the donkeys were that He needed. He told the disciples what to say because He knew that someone was going to ask them why they were taking them. He always knew exactly what to do and say to fulfill all Scripture, as He did when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

For He isn't only a prophet of God, but He is also the all-wise God in human flesh. Since this Lord knows all things, we commit ourselves to His times and seasons. He knows best, not us. The end of all things and our liberation from all sin, trouble, and death will come at exactly the right time.

So we are patient, or at least try to be. What happens if we are not? What if the disciples thought to themselves, "Hey! I see a donkey in that pasture over there. That'll be quicker and easier than the one Jesus told us to find." Things that seem quicker and easier are not necessarily the best. Perhaps the disciples would get that other donkey and then Christ would scold them for disobeying Him. Maybe they would chase the donkey in the pasture and never catch it. Maybe the owner was a grouchy bloke that would chase them around with a pitchfork.

Impatience leads to trouble and sin. Being patient and following the direction of Christ is always best. We wait for Him and do not run ahead as if we know best. But it's hard to wait. It's hard to restrain. We need to train ourselves to wait.

The world runs ahead in matters of marriage. "Why wait for a ceremony?" asks the world. "It's only a piece of paper. We love each other." So the world lives together and hops into bed without marriage. It's hard to convince people to wait. When they follow their feelings, they don't want to be patient.

It's good and useful to learn to wait. Christmas is just a few weeks away. By the time the holy day arrives, the world may have exhausted itself with all its parties and celebrations. Even if they are still full of joy, they will have missed the mark all along, by taking the focus away from Christ. Let us not abandon our discipline and patience, lest we join the world in an empty, meaningless celebration. Christ and His gifts are quickly left behind. After all, if the day of His birth is irrelevant to the celebration, then why mention it at all? Christmas is then all about family, or giving, or emotions, or whatever a person wants it to be.

But let us humble ourselves. The true holiday, the holy day, is about the Son of David coming, as promised, to save us pathetic sinners. Let us keep our eyes upon Him, and in humility prepare for His coming.

In His Name, who came, and is here now, and will come again. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen**  
**3rd Hymn: 350,**

## Prayer of the Church First Sunday in Advent 2017

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief silence*

P Lord, You have given us the stars as markers of days and seasons, and we thank You for bringing us to the beginning of a new Church Year. Keep us faithful as we move through its observances and celebrations. May we gather often to hear the proclamation of Your Son and receive the gifts You so freely bestow upon us. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P We do not know the time the Son of Man will come, that knowledge belongs only to You, O Lord. Keep us wakeful, watchful and ever ready for His arrival, so that we along with all Your faithful people may be gathered from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Lord of all nations, as we await the full coming of Your promised Kingdom, be with all who make, administer and judge our laws. May they use the authority that You have given them wisely and according to Your will. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, You are our Father, hide not Your face from us. Look with kindness especially upon  
and all who cry out to You in time of need.

According to Your will, give healing to the sick, comfort to those who mourn and perseverance to those who suffer for the sake of Your name. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Lord, even as we await Your coming in glory, You come to us in the here and now in the bread and wine that is the body and blood of Your Son. May all who approach Your table today receive the Sacrament worthily, so that with sins forgiven and faith strengthened Your people lack no gift as they await the revealing of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P We remember with thankfulness all the faithful who have gone before us and are now with You. Preserve and sustain us until the end, so that we will all be presented guiltless before You in the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 335,**