

“Come, Lord Jesus”

Dearly beloved, are you ready for it to be over? While the last Church Year has come to a close, and with this First Sunday in Advent we begin anew – I’m sure that many of you were thinking of 2020 being over when I asked that question.

During difficult times, Christians pray more fervently – “Come, Lord Jesus!” That is our prayer today – but I want you to notice what we pray for specifically in the Collect for today. “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.”

“Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come” was the prayer of God’s people in the days of Isaiah the prophet. They too had their struggles – a divided nation – threatening enemies – unfaithful rulers and religious leaders. But again, notice the specifics of what the Prophet Isaiah prays in our Old Testament reading for today.

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down ...” Can you imagine that! The Lord ripping open the heavens so that they might see the Lord descend from heaven to earth! Yes, the Lord was reigning over the heavens and the earth. Yes, the Lord was present with His people here on earth – but they want to see it with their own eyes! The prayer is for the heavens to be ripped open so that they could see the Lord and His work.

Not seeing what is true requires faith – but faith tires of waiting – it longs for results that can be seen – it yearns for the goal, the end of what is promised.

Over the past months I have heard people say, “Come, Lord Jesus” more than I have ever heard before. In the Collect today you pray that He would come. Is that what you want? Do you want the Lord to rend the heavens and come today – to take you to heaven?

Do I sense a little hesitancy? Is that not your prayer, at least, not today? Would you prefer that He delay His coming? Are there other things that you are waiting for, and longing for? The birth of a child? Seeing your children grow, get married, have children?

The more we suffer the chaos of this pandemic – the more we have to deal with riots, and a divided nation – the more we are ready for all of this to be over. And so, like God’s people who have come before us – we continue to pray – “Come, Lord Jesus.”

We are all tired of waiting – frustrated and fatigued by what we are enduring. So, when I hear these words from Isaiah, I’m tempted to misappropriate them. On the one hand, as a plea for the Lord to take note of our plight – as if God doesn’t know what is going on, and what we are going through. On the other hand, as a prayer that the Lord Jesus would come and take care of these enemies once and for all.

Come and make the mountains quake – make the water boil – make the adversaries and nations “tremble at your presence!” A Divine “shock and awe.” Certainly, that is part of the judgment of the Last Day when our Lord comes again – but that is not the point of Isaiah’s preaching to the people of his day, or to us today.

Like we do so often, we hear a Word of the Lord and we apply it to THEM, not to US. “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down” – to do what – to whom? Rather than an appeal for the Lord Jesus to sic ‘em – to attack our enemies – it is a plea that the Lord would come to us, and for us. As Isaiah declares – there is no God like you, “who acts for those who wait for Him.”

Our prayer is that the Lord would rend the heavens and come to US with His shock and awe – to make US tremble at His presence – to shake US from our slumber.

On the Last Day we will stand in the presence of the Lord to be judged – but the truth is that we stand in His presence today, and we are judged. That is why you confessed that you “justly deserve [His] present and eternal punishment.” He is right to be angry with us – because “in our sins we have been a long time.”

You confessed that you are “by nature sinful and unclean” – having cut off yourself from the presence of the Lord, as one spiritually unclean. “All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” – they are worth nothing before the face of the Lord.

“We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities” – what we have done, and left undone – “like the wind, [they] take us away.” “There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you.”

“Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come” we poor sinners cry – begging Him to be merciful to us. And indeed, He is merciful – because He is Our Father – we are the clay, and He is our potter – “we are all the work of [His] hand.”

So that He might not remain angry with us, and remember our iniquities forever – Our Father who art in heaven rends the heavens, and sends His only-begotten Son into our flesh. The heavens are ripped open, and the eternal Son of God comes down to take on our human frame – being conceived and born of the Virgin Mary.

From the time of Adam’s sin, and throughout the entire Old Testament – God’s people have prayed, “Come, Lord Jesus.” God comes into our flesh to take our sins, to endure our sufferings, to be judged in our place – so that we might be saved. “Hosanna” they shouted as Jesus enters into Jerusalem – “save us now” they cry out to Jesus.

And this common looking man, humbly rides into town in order to “save us now” by being sacrificed in our place. God knows the plight of His people. He knows our unworthiness – our inability to save ourselves – and so He comes to save you.

Dearly beloved, your prayers are answered this day – for the Crucified and Risen Christ comes to you with His salvation. What He earned with His obedient life and innocent suffering and death – He delivers to you today.

Like the crowds lining the road to Jerusalem – you sing your hosannas today – as the flesh and blood Jesus enters into your midst – covering all your iniquities with His blood to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Fear not as you stand in the presence of the Lord your God – for He declares you righteous, for Jesus’ sake. Today, the Lord looks upon you with favor, and gives you peace. What you see by faith today, you will see with your own eyes – when at the Last, He rends the heavens, once again, and comes down to deliver you to your heavenly home.

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Blessed are you, because Jesus comes to you this day. Amen.

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