

“He Comes to Save”

Have you ever been hurt by someone – I mean, really hurt by them? I’m not talking about being offended, or having your feelings hurt – but harmed in such a way that you’ve become angry – angry enough to do them harm.

Maybe you have been physically abused – betrayed by someone you love and trusted – wounded in some way, so as to leave you scarred.

The anger boils up every time you think about them and what they’ve done. Your heart races, your jaw clenches, the rage feels like it’s going to explode. You want revenge! You want them to get theirs in return – you want them to get what they deserve.

But maybe you remember what the Lord says to you. “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’” (Romans 12:17-19).

Though that is not what your sinful nature wants to hear, as a believing child of God you say – okay Lord Jesus, I’ll leave the vengeance to you – come, pour out your wrath – don’t let them get away with it.

That sounds a lot like our reading from Isaiah 64. “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!”

Okay Lord, come, make them tremble at your presence – come with a shock and awe that makes them tremble and fear – come and give them what they deserve.

Dear children of God – He hears and answers your prayers – but not according to your will, but that His will might be done. This season of Advent (which means “coming”) reminds us that our Lord has come, comes now in these days, and will come again on the Last Day.

It's as you sang in the Gradual today – “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.” That, folks, is His will. He desires that all would be saved – including those who have truly harmed you. He comes so that they would repent of their sins, trust in His forgiveness, and be saved.

Does that offend you? Does it make you angry that your enemy, your persecutor, the one who has betrayed you – should be spared God's wrath – that they be forgiven for what they've done, and be saved? Then repent. Repent of despising God and wanting God to follow your will. Repent of desiring the harm of your neighbor – harming him in your thoughts, words, and deeds.

St. Mark in his Gospel records the coming of the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem on the day that we call Palm Sunday – His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem – His coming in order to go to the cross, to suffer and die – so that sinners might be spared His wrath and be saved eternally.

When Jesus comes riding into town on a donkey, we often think of this as a sign of His humility – and it is – Jesus humbles Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary – He humbles Himself to suffer under Pontius Pilate and to be crucified. But there's more.

“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” the people cried out. Just as Solomon, the son of their forefather King David, was seated on a donkey and paraded through Jerusalem – so the crowds acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David – for the Lord has promised that one of his sons would sit upon his throne, and his reign would be from everlasting to everlasting.

“Hosanna!” they cry, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Jesus is the Messiah, their Savior. They too had their persecutors, their enemies – the Romans who had conquered them. Come, Lord Jesus – save us now – pour out your wrath and give them what they deserve.

How disappointed they were when Jesus didn't run the Romans out of town – didn't take an earthly throne and usher in a time of great peace and prosperity – putting down their enemies, and exalting them to places of honor. Instead, He ends up dead.

Dearly beloved, the Son of God comes from heaven to take on human flesh in the person of Jesus the Christ. God's Son takes on human flesh in order to take on the sin of all mankind – to become sin for us – and to be sacrificed on the altar of the cross for the salvation of sinners.

And here we sit, with revenge on our minds and anger in our hearts – wanting others to get what they deserve. Can you really pray – come, Lord Jesus – without fear and trembling? Do you really want Him to come and give sinners what they deserve – punishment, death, eternal damnation? Do you really want Him to come and give you what you deserve?

Jesus Christ, who for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven – is the same Christ who comes to you today – who comes for your salvation.

He truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords – all power and authority belong to Him – and He rules and reigns over all things. Yet He comes to you today, lowly, humble – using the mouth of a sinful pastor so that you might hear His voice – using plain water to wash you – using humble bread and wine for your salvation.

Your sinful revenge – your anger and hatred – and all your sin – He has taken as His own, suffered the punishment they deserve, paid the ransom price with His blood, and defeats death and the grave with His own death and rest in the tomb.

He who has canceled the debt of all your sin was raised to life again on the third day – and this day, He stands before you – not so that you tremble in fear – but so that you might be set free from the sin that consumes you and weighs you down.

Rather than giving you what you deserve – He gives what He desires for you. “I forgive you all your sin,” He proclaims. Here is my risen Body and Blood, so that you may be raised from the death of sin to a new life – a life without fear and trembling – a life of faith, of peace, of deliverance and salvation.

Blessed are you – because Jesus comes to save you. Amen.

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