

Why is Our King Coming to Us?

Today we turn the calendar page and begin a whole new Church Year which begins with the Season of Advent. Advent comes from a Latin word that simply means “the coming” – and it refers to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church has often spoken of this coming (or advent) in a threefold way. The Season of Advent focuses on the coming of the Promised Messiah of the Old Testament, reaching its climax with the celebration of the Birth of Jesus – God who has come in the flesh.

This Jesus, born in Bethlehem, grows up – begins His three year ministry – suffers under Pontius Pilate, is crucified, dies and is buried. He is raised from the dead – and before He ascends into heaven – He speaks of His “coming again” to judge the living and the dead – His second advent on the Last Day.

Not knowing when that day will be – when Jesus will return visibly to “raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ” – the Church eagerly awaits this Advent, His coming – and as we wait – we rejoice that our Lord comes to us, even now in these days, through His Word and Sacraments.

As those who live between the two Advents of Christ – His first coming in the flesh at Bethlehem, and His second coming in judgment on the Last Day – we may very well ask the question – why does our King come to us – what does He come to do?

Does He come to give us a pat on the back – give us a big old “atta boy” – and tell us to keep up the good work? Does He come to give us a kick in the pants – telling us to straighten up, repent – cast off the works of darkness?

The reason why God’s own Son comes to us is clearly revealed in the Gradual that we sing during this season – taken from Zechariah 9. “Behold, your king is coming to you.” Behold – look, see, pay attention! Why is He coming? “Your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.”

God's own Son takes on our human flesh in order that all mankind might be declared righteous before our Father in heaven. Jesus takes our sins – pays the wages with His own death upon the cross – so that He might clothe sinners with His righteousness.

On the Last Day, when Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead – that final and eternal judgment is dependent upon His sacrificial death in your place. Do you trust in Jesus's blood and righteousness as you stand before God – or do you trust in your own merits?

God's children rejoice to behold Christ alone as their righteousness and salvation. That's why they sing their hosannas – which means – Lord, "save us now." That's why Jesus comes into the world – that's why Jesus enters into Jerusalem – to "save us now." And that's why Jesus comes to you – today – here and now – to save you.

We are like the people in Isaiah's day. In the Old Testament reading we hear how they look forward to the days when the house of the Lord will be established in their midst, in Jerusalem.

But what you didn't hear in today's reading (in the previous chapter) is that the faithful city had become like a whore – perpetrating injustice upon the fatherless and the widows – God's people taking advantage of one another, rather than loving their neighbor as themselves.

In other words, the Lord who comes to them does come to give them a kick in the pants – to call them to repentance – to turn from their works of darkness and to walk in the light of the Lord.

And so the Lord comes to us today – in Word and Sacrament – to repent, to turn us. Our selfish, wicked deeds – done under the cover of darkness – He beholds them all. He exposes our unfaithfulness, and reveals the judgment we deserve – all so that we might cry out, "Hosanna" – Lord, "save us now."

And He does save us now. Behold, the Son of David, the Blessed One, God Himself – comes to us – covering the repentant sinner with His own righteousness.

So that we might not fear an eternal separation from God because of our sin – He announces His verdict to you today. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow – redeemed in the blood of the Lamb. That is His verdict when He comes to you today and declares – “I forgive you all your sin.” Behold! Your king coming to you, righteous and having salvation.

That is how we live in these days – as forgiven sinners – as the children of God who eagerly await the day when He will come again to take us to be with Him in heaven. But like the people of the Old Testament, we don’t know when the day of our Lord’s coming will be – and that is why He continues to come us to in these days with His Word and Sacraments – to preserve us in His salvation until He comes again.

Daily He calls us to “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Daily you live in your baptism – armored with Christ’s righteousness – so that the devil may not lead you away from your salvation – away from Christ your Savior.

Like the water of Baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper do not appear like anything to our human eyes – but just as the Lord revealed their King coming to them, humble and mounted on a donkey – so He reveals your King who comes to you with His very own Body and Blood – crucified and risen – for you, for your salvation.

And so, we like God’s children who have come before us, sing the Sanctus as our King comes to us in the Holy Supper. “Hosanna” – Lord, save us now. “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Dearly beloved – “Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation.” Amen.

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