

Sermon Draft

Text: Matthew 21:1–11

Sermon: “Our King is Coming”

This First Sunday in Advent marks the start of both a new Church Year (a very significant Church Year, since in this year we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation!) and the season of Advent. Although there are some common themes in Advent that carry over from the end of the Church Year’s focus on Christ’s second coming as King and Judge, Advent also focuses on Christ’s coming to us today through Word and Sacrament. This theme is brought out through today’s *Gospel* about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, a text that is typically heard on Palm Sunday as Holy Week begins.

The theme of the Lord coming to his mountain and his house is introduced in the *Old Testament Reading* (Isaiah 2:1–5). This reading describes people of all nations being drawn to the Lord’s house and the Lord then coming to judge, bringing an era of peace to people typically ravaged by war: the nations shall **“beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks”** (2:4). Our Psalm for this morning expresses these same themes.

Today is the start of a new Church Year, and I’m giving each of you advanced notice: Our King is Coming! I’m not talking about any earthly ruler visiting, but Jesus Christ, the true King of this world, this universe, all galaxies, and especially the King of your lives, is coming!

Some of you may be thinking, “Pastor, that’s old news. Of course, our King has come. Jesus came, died, rose again, and ascended.

Tell us something we don't know."

We all know that long before Jesus was born and long before Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as the Son of David, the prophet Zechariah had given Israel advanced notice: "**Behold, your king is coming to you; . . . humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**" (Zechariah 9:9) And as we heard in our Gospel Jesus fulfilled this promise of Zechariah by entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey. But what we sometimes do not think much about is that this same one who entered Jerusalem continues to come to us today and will one day come in glory on the Last Day.

How did the people of Jerusalem recognize Jesus as their king? Not by elegant clothes or a white horse. They trusted in that promise given by the prophet Zechariah: "**Your king is coming to you; . . . humble, and mounted on a donkey.**"

The king they needed was not an arrogant tyrant but a humble servant who would enter Jerusalem as Solomon had so long ago when he succeeded David: riding on a lowly donkey. Here was the humble King the world needs, someone who would reverse the pattern of sinful selfishness through humble service by dying a humiliating death on the cross in the place of every sinner. Jesus came as the humble King the world needs.

Our King is coming! How do we recognize Jesus' coming in our day and age? As in the first century, so also in the twenty-first century, our King is not recognized by elegant clothing or a white Jeep. No, he continues to come as the humble King we need, the King who serves rather than being served. As we look back over the Church Year that we've just completed, there are things that happened that we would rather forget. We're ready for a clean slate and new start. And that's why our King comes to each of us.

He comes clothed in humble words like **"Your sins are forgiven."** He comes clothed in common water with the invocation of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to assure us that we will always be his children, no matter what happened last year. He comes clothed in lowly bread and wine, which are his very body and blood, feeding us with life that lasts forever. He comes as the King we need, forgiving sins, showing grace upon grace!

How did Jerusalem of old welcome their king? They gathered a large group, spreading out their garments and tree branches on the road. They shouted, **"Hosanna, Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."** That one word, *hosanna*, says it all. It means "Save, we pray." The people welcomed their King as the only one who could save them from sin.

They welcomed him as one who comes in the name of the Lord because he is not just representing the Lord, but he shares the very name of the Lord and is the very Lord of whom King David wrote, "***The Lord is my shepherd.***"

How will we welcome Jesus as he comes to us in this new Church Year and on the Last Day? Our Gospel guides us to be like the faithful in Jerusalem of old and welcome Jesus as our Savior and Lord. The "Hosanna" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" are both from Psalm 118, which is a central part of the *Sanctus* in our Holy Communion liturgy. Jesus, our humble King, comes to us today, and we citizens of the new Jerusalem welcome our King, shouting out our hosannas, "Save, we pray," and knowing that in the Jesus whose body we eat and blood we drink we have the Savior and Lord who has and continues to serve us with exactly what we need: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Our King is coming! That's not just old news, but it continues to be fresh good news. It was true when Jesus entered Jerusalem to die for our sins. It was true on the day we were baptized and Jesus began to reign as the gracious King of our life. It is true today as we receive our King's perfect righteousness at this altar in his body and blood. It will be true throughout this new Church Year as our King continues to come humbly and be truly present with his gifts of life and salvation. And it will be true on the Last Day, when we will behold our King no longer coming in humility, but in radiant glory as Lord of lords and King of kings.

Our King is coming! Advent is a wonderful season for spiritual preparation and refreshment. Look at the streets where our King comes to us, humbly serving us; in our daily devotions, the extra midweek Advent services and our Sunday services with Holy Communion, our King comes to us.

This new Church Year is a very special one to celebrate his coming, because this year we will also celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Think about that! *Five hundred years* of our King coming to us in the Word and Sacraments that Christ used the Reformation to set free for us! So today, welcome him, sing your hosannas, and pray with Luther that ancient cradle song:

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,

Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,

A quiet chamber set apart

For You to dwell within my heart. (*LSB 358:13*)

Amen.