

# THE KING IS COMING

Luke 19:28-40

First Sunday in Advent (Series C)

December 1, 2024

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

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The gospel lesson comes from *The Gospel According to Luke*, chapter 19, verses 28 through 40. Please stand as you are able for the Gospel. From Luke 19, beginning at verse 28, we read in Jesus' name.

<sup>28</sup> And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’ ” <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup> And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” <sup>35</sup> And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” <sup>39</sup> And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” <sup>40</sup> He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

*Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.*

You may be seated.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

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The First Sunday in Advent is, in my opinion, one of the best Sundays of the church year, because it really captures the essence of Christianity. And I suppose you could say that about a lot of Sundays. Ideally, every time we come to church, we should say, “This is the best!” The thing about the First Sunday in Advent, is that it brings a lot of things together. It’s Advent, so we have this expectation of Christmas coming, and that’s exciting. But this gospel reading, in particular, also directs our attention to the cross, because that’s what Jesus was going into Jerusalem for. It was Palm Sunday, just five days before his crucifixion. So we have some Christmas, and we have some Good Friday, and this text wraps it up for us in the central theme that our King comes to us in order to save us. And that, really, is the essence of Christianity. Our King comes to us to save us.

Christianity is not a religion where we have to go searching for our God. You cannot ascend into heaven to join him there. You cannot pull God down. Every other religion is a religion of works. Some religions are all about morality. They’re religions of the will. If you do enough good works, you will earn the favor of their god. Other religions are all about the mind. You achieve some kind of enlightenment, and then you understand whatever their god may be. Others are religions of the spirit, where you achieve a mystical experience of their god. So, in some sense, all the other religions of the world are different from one another. But they’re all the same

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in the sense that it is always man who is doing something for God. They are all religions of works where you have to achieve something. And I suppose it has to be this way, because their gods aren't real. Their gods can't do any of the real work in the religion, because they just don't exist. In order to have a religion of grace, where God does the actual work, like in Christianity, the God has to exist. And I suppose that might be why Christianity is the only religion of grace. It's the only one where we don't have to go and find God. We don't have to earn his favor.

And Advent demonstrates that this is not just theoretical. I suppose someone, if they wanted to just prove us wrong about Christianity being the only religion of grace, they could just make up another religion and pretend that their new god is also gracious. But Advent is where God puts his money where his mouth is, so to speak. The word "Advent" is an old Latin word. It means "coming." It is the coming of God down to us. Our King comes to us to save us.

So during Advent we consider the three advents of Jesus. The simplest way to categorize them is as past, present, and future. One advent occurred in the past. The second advent occurs in the present. And the third advent will occur in the future.

The first advent is, of course, Christmas. The Son of God came down to us, literally. He came from his eternal home in heaven, assumed human flesh inside the Virgin Mary, was born, lived among us, was crucified for us, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. That's the first advent of Christ.

The second advent occurs in the present. It's the one we can't see, so sometimes it gets overlooked. But Jesus comes to us now. We are joined to him in Baptism. He comes to us through his Word when we are gathered in his Name. And he comes to us in the forms of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. We can't see this advent, but it's just as real as the first. Jesus promised his disciples, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). We're tempted to think that since Jesus ascended into heaven that he's no longer present with us. But that's not true. Paul writes in Ephesians 4 that Jesus "ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10). At the right hand of the Father, he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. This is how he fulfills his promise that "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). We can and should take great comfort in this present advent of Christ. He does not leave us as orphans (John 14:8), but even now, as we are gathered in his Name, he comes to us with his mercy. He always brings forgiveness to us. This is the second advent of Christ.

The third advent is Jesus' appearance in glory on the Last Day. Since the second advent is sometimes overlooked, the third is sometimes mistakenly called the "Second Advent" or the "Second Coming of Christ." And I'm sure I've called it that before without thinking much of it, so I apologize for adding to the confusion. But Christ's future appearance in glory is really his *third* advent. The Scriptures never actually call it the "Second Advent" or the "Second Coming." They do refer to it as his second *appearance* (Heb. 9:28), since his presence with us now is invisible, but not his second *coming*. Now, Jesus is coming again in visible form, but sometimes when we talk about it as his "coming," or his "advent," we can accidentally overlook his presence with us now. The Scriptures do still speak of it as his "coming." But it took me a long time to realize this, they never speak of it as his "return," because he never really left. "Return" is a word that we started using to speak of it. But the word that the Scriptures use much more often is "appearance." Jesus will appear again on the Last Day. The one who is present with us now invisibly, will come down again in glorious visible form to deliver us from evil for all eternity. So this is part of the season of Advent as well. We look forward to his glorious appearance. We look forward to it in repentance and faith. We know that when he appears again,

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he will come in judgment over the whole world. So we repent of our sins. That is, we confess them. We admit that God's Law is right about us. "We are by nature sinful and unclean, and ... we have sinned against [him] in thought, word, and deed." And we trust what God says through the Gospel, that he forgives our sins for the sake of Jesus' suffering and death. So then we look forward to his appearance on the Last Day with faith and anticipation. For all who trust in Christ, it will not be a day of judgment and destruction, but one of vindication and salvation. If we die before that glorious day, he will raise our bodies from the dead. All of us will see him. He will transform our bodies and souls into perfection. And he will bring us into his new creation, where we will live and reign with him in perfect blessedness for all eternity. It will be the end of sin, pain, death, and all evil forever. So we look forward with faith and anticipation, because it will be a day of perfect salvation. This is the third advent of Christ.

This theme of advent is really the essence of Christianity. Our King and Savior, Jesus Christ, comes to us to save us. We cannot save ourselves from death. It's going to get us. We cannot earn the favor of God. Our wills are turned against him. We cannot save ourselves. Our King and Savior, Jesus Christ, has to come and save us. And he does.

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This theme of Jesus as the King and Savior who comes to us is beautifully demonstrated by his entry into Jerusalem. Now remember, this happens just five days before his crucifixion. So it seems a little out of place chronologically for us to consider it now instead of on Palm Sunday, but, thematically, it's a really great way to start Advent. And it reminds us where all of this is going. A little baby boy, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger under a starry sky is cute and all, but cuteness isn't the point of Christmas. The point of it has always been sacrifice for the salvation of the world. And Jesus' entry into Jerusalem demonstrates this. It demonstrates his humility and his royalty at the same time.

As he came near to Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples to fetch a donkey colt for him. Jesus sat on the colt, which was a strange thing to do. No one had ever ridden on this colt before (19:30). That's because people don't ride on donkey colts; they're too small. So it probably looked ridiculous. But this act demonstrates Jesus' humility.

And it was prophesied that the Christ would do this. Five hundred and some years earlier, Zechariah said,

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So the donkey demonstrates Jesus' humility. And by that, I mean true humility, the kind that considers others as more important and serves others. So it's a fitting symbol as Jesus comes into Jerusalem, the city in which he will be betrayed, condemned, and crucified as a sacrifice for the world. His humility is the kind that serves others. He lays down his life for others.

But it's also an audacious humility, which seems oxymoronic, but, at least with Jesus, it works. He wants everyone to know about his humility. He makes a big show of it. The reason, of course, is that his big act of humility, laying down his life, is how we are saved. So he needs to advertise his humility in order for us to know we should trust in it.

And he's intentionally fulfilling this prophecy from Zechariah. It's not like his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), where, at least according to his human nature, he didn't do anything to

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arrange it that way. Babies don't decide where they're born. But here, he knows the prophecy from Zechariah. Many of the people in attendance would also know it. So Jesus intentionally arranges the whole thing in order to proclaim himself to be King. It's both humble and audacious. It is that way because it looks forward to his crucifixion.

And Luke's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is especially fitting for Advent, because it has a neat little connection with the story of Jesus' birth. And this, I think, probably makes it my favorite account of the triumphal entry. The people say, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (19:38). Now think about that phrase: "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." What does it remind you of? Hint: think Christmas ... and the angels. In twenty-three days, we're going to read the Christmas story from Luke 2, where the angel proclaims to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth" (2:14). It's so neat how Luke includes these details from both events in order to link Christmas and the cross together. He shows that the point of Jesus coming to us is to be our sacrifice. But there's one little change in what the crowd says. The angels proclaimed "peace on earth." And that's right, because Jesus had come down to the earth in peace. But when he rides into Jerusalem, the crowd exclaims, "Peace in *heaven* and glory in the highest!" And they are so right, because Jesus goes to the cross in order to make peace in heaven. As God in human flesh, he represents all of humanity, and he makes peace between God and man. Jesus' blood has satisfied the wrath of God. He is the mediator between God and man (Heb. 9:15; 12:24). That's the purpose for which he came, and now heaven is a place of perfect peace for you. You can dwell in heaven with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect peace.

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Your King and Savior, Jesus Christ, has come to earth to save you. He came in the humble form of a poor infant. He lived humbly and obediently. He was crucified, suffered, and died under great disgrace. He rose again and ascended into heaven. But he still comes to you now, humbly and with salvation, through his Word. He gives his body and blood to you in the Lord's Supper to give you his forgiveness and life. And he will come again in great power and glory to finally vindicate you and deliver you from all evil. So you will live with him in perfect peace. Your King and Savior, Jesus Christ, comes to you with salvation. Amen.

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Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.