

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Advent I
27 November 2011
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
Mk 11:1-10

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Advent is the beginning of a new Church Year,
so, Happy New Year!

Today we start the story of Christ and His love for you all over again!

Today we see a new color, Blue,
representing the horizons, royalty, and the mother of our Lord, Mary—
blue is Mary's color, and Advent prepares us to wait with Mary,
to wait for the Son who came to redeem this world!

Today we begin a new liturgy—
still the Divine Service, still God serving us with His gifts of grace and mercy,
but a different setting, different music.

And today we also begin to light the candles, the Advent candles—
both here and at home, as we gather as families around the Word of God and prayer.

Advent is a new year, a new season of hope and faith and love.

But even though Advent comes every year as a season preparing us for Christmas,
it doesn't prepare us for Jesus to come again in weakness, as a babe born in Bethlehem.

Rather, it prepares us to recognize the *fact* that He has come,
and that by His coming in weakness, He will come again in glory,
and that while we wait, He comes to us in grace.

Advent, the Church Year, and our Liturgy are all part of a dramatic play—
but we must remember that it's not make believe or a fairy tale!

Advent tells us that this Jesus is the real deal!
That God sent His Son to be *conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary*—why?
So that He could come to you in grace and forgiveness,
no longer in anger and wrath.

But in order for God to come to you with healing and forgiveness,
God first became Man!

We call this the *Incarnation*,
which simply means the *enfleshment*—
taking on our flesh and blood, a body like ours.

We confess this in the creed when we say, "*Born of the Virgin Mary.*"

We also sang about this in our opening hymn today,
 “The everlasting Son
Incarinate deigns to be,
 Himself a servant’s form puts on
 To set His servants free” (331:2).

That God becomes man, incarnate with flesh and blood like us,
 means that God becomes visible, touchable, hearable, and if you want, smellable.

He becomes, I guess you could say, *real*—
 at least as scientists consider things real.

God, in Christ, can be measured, located, found, and called upon.

In Christ God has a name, Jesus!,
 by which you can ask Him for things and know that He hears.

The shepherds and wise men,
 the angels and animals,
 and especially Mary and Joseph knew that God dwelled among man because they *saw* Him.
 Mary and Joseph *held* Him.
 Indeed, Mary even *fed* God Himself as any mother feeds her newborn.

For them God was *real*—
 and they knew it because He was man,
 because they saw and heard and touched and were gathered around Him in Christ.

And this Christ Jesus, who was visible, hearable, touchable, and smellable, God Incarnate—
 this Jesus came to man.

Advent teaches us to remember the *fact* of His coming, the realness of His flesh.
 Through the drama of waiting and anticipation,
 we’re called to remember the fact of the incarnation—

That the God who became Man, Now Comes to Man.

We speak of His coming to us in today’s Introit:
 “***Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation.***”

Our OT reading for today prays for God to come to us, and to come quickly!
 “**Oh that You would rend the heavens and come down**” (Isa 64:1).

And in praying the Lord’s Prayer we say the same:
 “**Thy kingdom come,**
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

And finally, with all those gathered on that Palm Sunday long ago, we shout our *Hosannas*:
**“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”** (Mk 11:9-10).

But why?

Why do we care that God takes on flesh and comes to us?

Why does Advent teach us to remember the facts, the reality?

Because when left to ourselves, we’d do it differently.

God becoming man is a sign of weakness.

That the creator of the world would be dependent on His mother’s milk,
 that the King of the World would ride a lowly donkey,
 and have a feeding trough as His throne,
 that the “Immortal, invisible, God only wise” (LSB 802),
 would become *mortal* and *visible* and be seen dying a fool’s death on the cross—
 who could imagine such a thing?

Advent also teaches us to believe.

By His coming to us as a man, coming to us in weakness,
 we’re taught to believe not in power or the coercion of God,
 but in His mercy, His compassion, His Goodness and gentleness.

Advent prepares us to believe that this God who became man in Christ,
 who came to His people long ago in Jerusalem, riding a donkey amidst shouts of Hosanna,
 is the God who became flesh and comes to us in grace to forgive our sins.

As Isaiah says in today’s OT reading,

“In our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?
 We have all become like one who is unclean,
 and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” (Isa 64:5-6).

We say the same thing in our confession today,

“I, a poor, miserable sinner,
 confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You
 and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment.”

We pray also in our collect for mercy, for God to come and rescue us from our sins:

“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” (Collect).

Advent teaches us as Christians to pray for our salvation.

And in doing so, it shows us where our salvation lies:
in the blood of Jesus!

This Jesus,
who is God incarnate,
God with flesh and blood,
God who is visible, touchable, hearable, smellable,
comes to us also as one who is taste-able!

He comes to us in Jesus,
who's name means *The Lord saves!*

He comes to us on this altar, with His true body and true blood—
the *real* stuff, the visible, touchable, taste-able, smellable, body and blood.

He gives Himself to us to forgive us,
to rescue us from our misery,
to heal us from the weakness of our flesh,
to strengthen us and feed us with His good gifts!

That's what Advent is all about, reminding us of the fact, the reality,
God becoming man, coming to man, in order to forgive man.

And so as we cry out to God this Advent season with our *Hosannas*,
which means, "God save us now!",
we're taught to see and behold our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, who is God in the flesh,
is the one who comes to you.

And while He came once riding on a donkey,
as a man, in weakness and humility,
so He comes to you again today—
in His Word, in this gathering of the Church, His bride.

He comes with His body and blood, the real stuff, for you and your forgiveness.

In Christ, your sins, like polluted garments, are made white and clean—
you are forgiven.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit