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Advent I
28 November 2010
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Mt 21:1-11

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

When the Church sings, “*The Advent of our King*,” what does she mean?

Well, first off, Advent means “coming,” “approaching,” or “drawing near.”

It’s a word of motion and anticipation; a word of waiting.

And so the Church’s Advent Season is marked by waiting for the coming,
approaching, drawing near King.

But what’s a King?

While we’ve given up on the monarchy, we still know what’s appropriate for a king:

a golden crown, a shiny ring, long flowing robes,
servants waiting on him hand and foot,
gold and silver, power and might—
highly exalted, strong, and fearful.

But Matthew’s Gospel for today gives us no such King.

Instead, we have a poor beggar,

riding a young, untamed donkey—even “a colt, the foal of a beast of burden” (Mt 21:5).

No golden crown, no shiny ring, no long flowing robes—

just some dirty garments that others tossed on the borrowed donkey.

Here we have a poor beggar coming lowly, humble, and without any majesty.

And yet the Church sings, *The Advent of Our King*.

The Church gathers along the road shouting her *Hosanna*’s before this Jesus.

Really?

That’s our King?

He’s the one to save Jerusalem, the city of God, the Church—me?

Yes, it’s a bit odd.

But Advent has a way of turning things around on us,
giving us what we wouldn’t expect, but what we need.

Advent is the story of Christ’s coming in the flesh—

a season of preparation,
of getting everything in order,
especially our lives.

And so Advent is a time for repentance.

It's a time for you to listen to the prophets,
 "O House of Jacob, *come*, let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isa 2:5).

Trinity/Grace, *come*!

Walk in the light of the Lord!

"Wake from your sleep; your salvation is nearer now than before" (Rom 13:11)!

"Cast off your works of darkness" (13:12).

Stop cheating your neighbor,

gossiping behind her back,

lusting after what's not your own,

and fighting amongst yourselves.

Come! "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (13:14)!

Repent—.

The Church prepares for the Advent of Her King by repentance.

By confessing her sin,

by turning away from her deeds of darkness,

and by believing that the forgiveness which the pastor speaks is from the

Lord Himself—

in repentance she prepares to meet her King.

But do remember what sort of King He is—

He's not a proper King as we'd imagine:

No fanfare or gold-laden manger,

but your standard, run of the mill manger.

No purple flowing robes, made of expensive silk,

but swaddling clothes.

No myriads of servants and soldiers,

but shepherds, sheep, and an ox instead.

He's not a proper King as we'd have Him—

But King nonetheless.

This Jesus, whom the Church prepares to meet in the manger on Christmas Day,
 is the King of Israel, the King of the Church, your King.

However, His Advent on Christmas is only one of His many Advents.

He also has an Advent into Jerusalem, called "Palm Sunday,"

where He rides His way to the Cross.

You might've noticed, today's Gospel is the same as that traditionally read Palm Sunday:

The Triumphal Entry!

And so the Advent of Our King ties the Church both to the manger and to the cross.

As Jesus rode humble, and mounted on a donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday,

so also He rode humble, mounted on a donkey, in Mary's womb, to the manger.

God the Son became Man in order to die.
 Manger and Cross go together—
 they show you what kind of King He is.

But that's not all of our Lord's Advents—
 He has His Advent each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper!
 He comes humble, riding on simple bread and wine.
 He has His Advent each time we hear the Holy Scriptures,
 the story of our Lord's work of delivering us from sin, death, and the devil—
 coming again, humble, riding on mere words—even words written by men.

This is how our Lord wants to be known—
 this is the sort of King He is—
 the Humble and riding on a donkey sort.

And He won't let you have Him any other way.
 He won't be known as the King of Glory, Power and Might—
 Not yet!
 That's for an Advent still to come!

For now, He's the *backward King*—
 The King who empties Himself of power, might, coercion, and grandeur,
 The King who rejects the chariot and the war horse in place of the donkey,
 The King who in all lowliness, offers Himself as a Servant—
 The Servant who hears and fulfills the cries for *Hosanna*—
O Lord, Save us now! (Ps 118:25)

The Advent Season draws you out of your everyday-Kansas-lives,
 and tosses you back into the Old Testament,
 inviting you to gather around the prophets and their preaching of Christ's Advent.

You're given the Psalms as your prayer book,
 the prophets as your preachers,
 and the Torah as your foundation of what sort of Lord this is.

And so, when the crowds gather in the streets,
 watching this poor beggar ride in on a donkey,
 you join them, crying out:
*Hosanna! Save us, we pray, O LORD! Blessed is He who comes in the
 name of the LORD! (Ps 118:25)*

Gathered into this crowd you recognize Jesus as your King—
 the promised King to come.

While He doesn't look like the King we'd imagine—
 casting aside all our thoughts of glory, splendor, and might—

we know He's King because He's the One from the Psalms;
 He's the One the Prophets saw in dreams and visions;
 He's the One that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, knew as Yahweh.
 And it's *His* story the Gospels tell!

This Jesus is King.

He's the King who turns everything upside down and backwards.
 He's the one who rules by humility and lowliness,
 by the cross as a Servant, a *Suffering Servant*,
 for you.

The Church sings *The Advent of Our King* in preparation and waiting for this Jesus.

She patiently waits for His Advent as King in the manger—
 not as if He hasn't yet come, but as He comes to us anew every day in His Word.
 She waits for His Advent into Jerusalem as the King enthroned on a cross.
 She waits for His Advent into bread and wine as the King who delivers His gifts through
 simple, basic means.
 And finally, she waits for His Advent again in glory—
 But not yet.

For now we're given to wait for the *backward King*,

who draws the Church from Advent to Palm Sunday,
 teaching her that this King comes lowly, humble, crucified, and weak;
 He comes as you wouldn't expect,
 righteous and having salvation (Zech 9:9),
 forgiving your sin, hearing your cries of Hosanna—
 and He comes to you.

Jesus said,

“Truly I say to you, you will not see Me again until you say,
 ‘Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord’ (Mt 23:39).”

And so the Church, singing her “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the Sanctus,

Confesses Christ's Advent in bread and wine by saying,
 “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord” (Mt 23:39).

Because that's just the sort of King He is.

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