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Advent I – Feast of St. Andrew
30 December 2014
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Mk 11.1-10

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

Wichita is unique in having a Missouri Synod congregation called “St. Andrews.”
Most Lutherans prefer other saints,
 like St. John, or the favorite, St. Paul.
Every once in a while you’ll find a St. Peter Lutheran Church—
 but he’s a bit too Roman Catholic.
And good luck finding a St. Mary’s Lutheran—
 you’ll find St. Athanasius before St. Mary!

Lutherans do like Saints—as long as they’re the safe ones.
Mary and Peter are too Catholic.
Bartholomew and Matthias are too obscure.
St. Jude easily gets confused with Judas.
And Andrew just gets left out.

But there’s a lot going for St. Andrew.
If you’ve ever seen the Scottish flag, you’d know his color is blue and his symbol’s an ‘X’—
 supposedly, that’s the sort of cross he died on.
 They like St. Andrew in Scotland!

Andrew’s also the first Apostle.
He preached Christ to Peter.
You could say he’s the first missionary too,
 and with all our love for ‘missions,’ you’d think he’d get more respect.

And as the first Apostle, St. Andrew’s feast day also determines the beginning of the church year.
Advent always begins the Sunday closest to St. Andrew’s day—
 today they’re one and the same.

In this way, the Church calendar begins with missions.
And ‘missions’ is only as good as the Jesus it proclaims.
It matters what is preached, *who* is preached.
 Get Jesus wrong, and missions is useless—even harmful.

Advent’s mission is to give you a Jesus who isn’t cute and who isn’t safe.
It’s the season of rude awakenings.
While the world relishes in the season of eggnog and shopping, materialism and gluttony,
 the Church slows down, repents, fasts, and sets her eyes on what sort of Christ is coming.
Rather than easing into the holiday season, we’re confronted with John the Baptizer
 and his gross dietary habits.

The Jesus John preaches comes with a winnowing fork.
Separating the sheep from the goats; the wheat from the chaff.

Advent's Jesus isn't the cute babe in Mary's arms, or the one worshipped by the Magi.
 Advent's Jesus has his face set toward Jerusalem.
 He's almost mad—riding into the Temple, heading to the cross, to die for the sin of the world.

Advent doesn't care to help you recreate childhood nostalgia.
 It doesn't come with pumpkin spice or jingle bells.
 The decorations aren't for warm fuzzies.
 And the only fires burning are those by which Peter warmed himself,
 while denying he knew the Nazarene.

Like the Lion in the Chronicles of Narnia,
 Advent's Jesus isn't safe—and neither is St. Andrew—but He is good.

He's the long-expected *coming One*.
 The one promised already to Eve, to crush that serpent's head.
 And ever since, the saints of old have longed to meet this coming One.

But for us, it's not like Advent is a time to pretend He *hasn't* already come.
 It's not a season where we try to imagine a world without or before God in the flesh.
 Advent's not a magical time of make-believe—
 no matter what you hear in the department stores,
 or see in the stories of Santa.

Christ *has* come.
 Christmas really did happen 2000 years ago.
 We know how the story goes.
 We know it's beginning in the manger, and we know why today He rides into Jerusalem.

This Christ is God Himself in human flesh, who suffered, died, and rose again.
 Easter also really happened.
 There's no pretending otherwise.

So Advent isn't just about God coming to us in the flesh *in the manger*;
 but it's also about His coming to us in the flesh *in glory to judge the living and the dead*;
 and more immediately, it's about His coming to us in the flesh *in the Eucharist*.

For it's by this Holy Supper that we are united to Him and participate in His life.
 Here, at this altar, God actually comes (*advents*) and calls us into His story.
 And all those who participate in Him, share also in His madness, His *unsafe-ness*, His cross.

This is the Jesus Advent delivers.
 It's John the Baptizer's Jesus, and therefore St. Andrew's Jesus.

John's Gospel tells us:

*"The next day again John [the Baptizer] was standing with two of his disciples,
and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'
The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus...
One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew,
Simon Peter's brother.
He first found his own brother Simon and said to him,
'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ).
He brought him to Jesus." (Jn 1:35-37, 40-42)*

All missions are only as good as the Jesus they deliver.

Andrew's mission to Peter and to the world was to follow the Baptizer's bony finger all the way to Lamb of God.

He wasn't a cute Jesus, or a cuddly lamb.

He wasn't there for nostalgia's sake, or for you to get a warm feeling inside.

He's not safe, but He certainly is good.

For Andrew, and Advent, and John the Baptizer, and all those who went before will attest:

*"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
Hosanna in the highest!" (Mk 11:9-10)*

And so do we.

We join the crowds on Palm Sunday as we sing the angelic hymn at the Supper.

We pray for a Savior, a King—one who will set the world right, and even help us too.

And He does.

He comes.

But while we await His coming again, we know that the wait won't be easy.

John the Baptizer had his head lopped off and served on a silver platter.

St. Andrew, after being crucified on an 'X'-shaped cross, also had his head cut off—

I've seen it in a church in Greece.

That's what it means to be a disciple of this Christ.

It's not safe, if you're concerned about keeping your body or reputation intact.

Though we often seek a safer, tamer, easier Jesus—

one who makes us feel good and lends Himself well to Hallmark—
ultimately, it doesn't matter.

He seeks us.

And the Jesus we get is the Jesus we need:

the one who rides into Jerusalem for us and for our salvation.

"Hosanna in the highest!"

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