

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

You can't have Jesus on neutral ground.
You can't be indifferent.

He's always either loved or hated,
received with joy or crucified with contempt—
you can't be apathetic about Jesus.

He's a man of extremes, one or the other, not a nice mingling of both.
You can't have Jesus part way;
and He won't have you part way.

With Jesus it's all or none.

No other figure in the world is received this way.
No one else causes such an uproar or spectacle.
No one elicits such joy and no one such scorn.

We see this in today's Gospel.

As Jesus did the Palm Sunday bit by riding another man's donkey into Jerusalem,
there were two drastically different responses:

“As He was drawing near...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, saying,

**‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” (Lk 19:37-38)**

**“And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him,
‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’” (19:39)**

The disciples lay down their garments and acclaim Him the Coming One, the King, the Messiah.
The Pharisees call for Jesus to rebuke His disciples;
in their minds, they've uttered blasphemy.

That's how it is with Jesus: either praise and joy, or anger and disdain
So I suppose the Law question must be asked:
“How do you receive Him?”

Are you with the Pharisees, who want the focus to be on them?
Or are with the disciples who put all they have under His feet—even under the colt's feet?

Today's events are really Palm Sunday events.
This is His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem—as the hymn puts it:
Ride on, ride on in majesty.

This is the final leg toward the cross,
 the nearing of the end,
 a part of His coming crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

So what does this have to do with Advent?

Advent should be about the Baby Jesus, not the riding-on-a-donkey Jesus.
 It should be about the joy and excitement of the birth,
 not the preparations for His funeral.

So why this reading? Why now?

Well, it's all about how this Jesus is received.

As He entered Jerusalem no one stayed home.
 No one said, "but the games on, I'll come later."
 No one said, "I'm busy with this or that; or I need my sleep."
 Everyone went—like Him or hate Him—they went.

Advent invites the same sort of response.

We see the same thing when Jesus was born.
 While the Shepherds and Angels, the Wise men and cattle all gathered around the manger—
 giving glory to God in the Highest,
 and promising peace to His people on earth—
 Herod sought to eliminate the threat,
 so with the birth of Christ, the slaughter of the holy innocents quickly follows.

Around this Jesus the response is always life and death; joy and fear; love and hate.

And that's how it always was and always will be.
 His Sabbath especially showed the great divide:
 The miracles produced joy in those believing,
 but hate in those who opposed Him.

And after all our focus recently on the Last Day, the end times—
 is that not also how it will be when He comes again in glory?
 All will see Him coming on the clouds,
 and yet there will be those on His right and those on His left.

So what makes us think it'll be any different today?
 Wherever Jesus is, there is this great divide.
 There is always faith and doubt,
 love and hate,
 joy and fear.

How will you receive Jesus?

It's always easier to say how you would receive Jesus than how you *have received* Jesus.

Even those goats on His left said,

“When did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison,
and did not minister to you?” (Mt 25:44)

Surely, had they *seen* Him, they would've done all these things.

But they didn't.

They didn't see Jesus in their neighbor or their fellow man,

their coworker or their children,

their teacher or boss or those walking the streets.

They didn't see Jesus in the lowly or the unbecoming.

They didn't see Jesus in the humility of the donkey, or the lowliness of the manger.

They didn't see Jesus in the simple bread or the cheap wine,

in the voice of a sinful pastor or the gathering of the faithful.

What they *saw* were a bunch of sinners undeserving of their effort.

What they *saw* was in no way the proper coming of the King.

So they didn't see Jesus, and they didn't receive Him with joy, and they didn't enter the kingdom.

And how about you?

How often have you despised the lowly and the rejected?

How often have you sought the things that would help you out, and raise you up, and serve you?

While we surely want to do well and receive Him rightly, we don't.

That's the reality of our sin.

It sucks out all our joy.

It refuses to receive gifts freely.

It turns us in on ourselves and blinds us from seeing Christ as He gives Himself to be seen.

But thanks be to God that this Jesus isn't like us in our sin.

He rides into Jerusalem on a colt, “which has never been ridden;”

and a week later lays in a tomb, “in which no one has ever been laid.”

He comes in a way no one has ever come before—of a virgin, by the Spirit, in humility, *for you!*

He receives you with the joy of paradise and the praise of the angels.

He takes you up into His life, to live under Him in His kingdom,

to share with Him in His righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Thanks be to God that's who this Jesus is *for you*.

And what matters most is how He receives you: with joy, with compassion, and forgiven.

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