

30 November 2003
Advent 1

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“See, your King comes to you”

Text: Zechariah 9:9b (Introit); Luke 19:28-40

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

“*WTOP traffic and weather together on the 8’s.*” My kids know that phrase so well that sometimes they imitate it in the car. Traffic reports every 10 minutes, like clockwork. In this area, you’d be hard pressed to think up any news item that is more important to more people than these traffic reports. Headlines come twice an hour – traffic reports come 6 times an hour!

Because we have to get there! Where? Work, home, school, friends, church, activities. And you need to know the way, and which way to go, and which way not to go. And if you go the wrong way, you will pay for it with a vengeance! Because sometimes, you just can’t get there from here.

And so how good to hear this evening, how good to hear these words of our Lord from the prophet Zechariah that we sang in the Introit: “***See, your King comes to you.***” We tired, weary, travelers, don’t have to get to Him. Your King is coming to you. He does not take the chance that something may get in our way, or that we will get lost, or that we will not know which way to go, or which way not to go – He eliminates all of that, and comes to us. He takes it upon Himself. And how good is that to hear!

And so we begin today the season of Advent, *the season of coming*, as we wait to celebrate the coming of our Lord in His birth in Bethlehem. He came to us. We know that story and we know it so well and the temptation is to jump right to that story and celebrate it now, skipping Advent. Many will do just that. But as I said to you last year, and as I will say to you every year, **don’t let Christmas spoil your Advent!** Let us spend some time preparing for His coming, and pondering His coming, that we might know and appreciate how wondrous it is.

“***See, your King comes to you.***” First of all, recognize that’s not necessarily good news. I can still remember when I was growing up and my Father told me he was coming up to my room. He didn’t climb up the stairs too often, to where the bedrooms were for us kids, so when he did, it was usually because he was coming after us; because I had done

something wrong. . . . And know that many today feel that way about the coming of our King, the coming of God. Because we have done something wrong; in fact, many things wrong. Because we are sinful and sin-filled. ***“Poor, miserable sinners”*** we confessed earlier. Guilty, and ***“justly deserving God’s punishment, now and forever.”*** And just as my pleading to my Father that “I was good yesterday” did little good, so does our pleading any merit or worthiness with God do little good. Sin is sin. And so for many, if God is coming down here, like my father was *“coming up there!”* then perhaps its time to hide under the bed!

But in the Holy Gospel we heard this evening, there was a very different picture of our King coming to us. He comes on a borrowed donkey, not a war horse or chariot. He comes humbly, not powerfully. He comes to the sound of kids shouting in the streets, not soldiers pounding on the gates. He comes without weapons before Him, but with clothes and palm branches strewn before Him. He comes not in anger, but in peace. And He comes to make peace. His birth in the Jerusalem suburb of Bethlehem was much the same, and it foreshadowed how He would return to Jerusalem, coming to His people.

And so the prophet Zechariah wrote: ***“See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation.”*** Those last are important words there. . . . It is sometimes said that *“power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely,”* and we see that in many earthly leaders and kings. But your King comes to you in righteousness. There is no corruption or deceit in Him, no ulterior motives, no hidden agenda. He is no politician. He comes in perfect “right-ness.” What you see is what you get. He teaches the truth, He heals the sick, He lifts up the poor, He welcomes the outcast, He forgives the repentant, He befriends the lonely. This is the One who is coming to you.

“See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation.” Or another way to translate that is that ***“He comes, righteous and saving.”*** Or, ***“He comes, righteous and a Saviour.”*** All three go together. The *Saviour* comes to *save* because He has *salvation*. Or, the One having *salvation*, *saves*, because He is the *Saviour*. And since there is no other Saviour, there is no other salvation. And so your King is coming to you, yes – but even more important than that, He is not “coming after you,” but coming **for you**.

And so at the coming of such a King, we do not run and hide, but **repent**. That is also what the season of Advent is, a season of repentance. Because repentance is not a bad thing, as so many would have us think! It is, rather, a good thing, because it is what puts us in the position **to receive the salvation** that our King has come to bring. It is what puts us in the position **to receive the gifts** that He has come to bring. And so kneeling or falling before Him as sinners, our King comes to us and raises us with His Absolution, His forgiveness. Coming before Him as children of this world, our King comes to us and

adopts us as His children, and makes us children of God through the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism. Coming before Him sick and weak and diseased by sin, our King comes to us and heals and strengthen and forgives as He feeds us with His holy food, His very body and blood. And coming before Him with our ears and minds filled with the lies and deception of this world, our King comes to us and speaks His Word of truth. For just as our King came to Jerusalem, humbly, righteous and having salvation, so He comes to His Church, His New Jerusalem, in humble means, and with the same righteousness and salvation. Coming as Saviour. Coming to save.

And as the men, women, and children of Jerusalem rejoiced and praised God as their King came humbly to them, so we too sing their song as the King comes humbly to us: ***“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”*** The same song for the same King. The same joy for the same salvation. For we are the stones whose mouths Jesus has opened. For as Jesus said in response to the rebuke of the Pharisees, ***“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out”*** . . . well, they have! For before the coming of our King to us, we were stones. Unbelieving stones. With cold, stony hearts. With heads as hard against God as rock. But our King has come to us and given us life. He has made us “living stones.” He has softened our hard hearts with His forgiveness. He has smashed our hard heads with His Law, but also healed with His Gospel. *He has opened our lips, and our mouths have declared His praise.*

“See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation.” How good is it to hear those words. To know that our King is coming to us and has not forgotten us. To know that our King is coming to us with forgiveness, not vengeance. To know that our King is coming to us, and will come again in glory, to take us to where He is. For, you see, He **can**. Or as we heard last week, He is **able**. For after ascending onto that donkey and riding into Jerusalem, He ascended the cross and rode it into death. But three days later, the King came back! He came back in His resurrection, the victor of sin, death, devil, and hell, and came back to give us that same victory. And He **has** given us that victory, already now. For you are forgiven. His cross was your cross. His death, your death. His resurrection, your resurrection. His victory, your victory. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

And so we sang, *“Savior of the Nations, Come.”* Come to us now in your kingdom of grace, your Church, and save us. Come to us soon in your kingdom of glory, your Heaven, and take us home. Come, because we know there is no better news than this. Come, because we cannot come to you. Come, and forgive. . . . And coming, He now calls to you to come, and receive His gifts. Come and repent. Come and be washed. Come and hear. Come and feast. Come, for your King is here, **for you**.

And if WTOP can announce the traffic and weather six times every hour on the 8's, because its so important, let us announce this good news even more, that all may know the way home.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.