

Jesu Juva

“Your Coming King”

Text: Matthew 21:1-11; Romans 13:11-14

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

Donkeys are not the preferred mode of transportation this weekend - that would be planes, trains, and automobiles, as folks try to get home as quickly as possible, and avoid trouble spots along the way. So donkeys are not preferred . . . unless you're Jesus. He's going home too, you see. But He's not going as fast as He can, and He's not trying to avoid all the trouble spots along the way. No, Jesus is going home through the cross. And He's going home that way so that we can go home too.

So a new Church Year begins as it always begins - with a view to the end. We consider the end of the story, the destination - Jerusalem and the cross - so we will understand the beginning. So we will understand why Jesus comes. So we will understand why Jesus does what He does and says what He says. For ultimately, only one thing matters for Him: you. So He goes to the cross, and nothing will stop Him. He goes to the cross, *for you*.

So to help us consider this today, we heard some words from Matthew, who gives us some words from the prophet Zechariah, who said: ***Say to the daughter of Zion***, - that's you - ***'Behold, your king is coming to you . . .'*** Jesus really is the King of the Jews, as Pilate would put over His head on the cross. Quite right. It wasn't really Saul or David or Solomon or all the rest. They were the kings during the time Israel had rejected her true king, which was God Himself. They were the place holder kings until the real king would return.

The real king, Jesus, the Son of God, who now enters Jerusalem, the capital, in royal procession, to claim His throne. Only it doesn't look like a throne. To the human eye it looks like a cross. But it is a throne. For from the cross is where Jesus will rule His people - in the power of His forgiveness, mercy, and love. For He is the King of the Jews but not only the Jews, but of all people. And He is a king who rules by service, which is how it was always meant to be. A king who does what is best for His people, not for Himself.

But Zechariah tells us more about our King who is coming. He says: ***'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey . . .'*** Or in other words, now is not the time for glory for Jesus. That time will come, in its appointed time, with the glory of Jesus' resurrection and the glory of Jesus' return, when He comes to you riding on the clouds of heaven with all His angels around Him. But not yet. The humble must come

before the glory - not because He needs it, but because we do. We need to see how great the love of God for us, that the Creator would become a humble man. We need to see the love of God for us, that He would set aside His glory and come to us in humility. We need to see the love of God for us that before He comes in judgment, first He comes to take that judgment upon Himself - to take our place, that we can have His place. He comes to die with us, that we live with Him.

So Jesus comes *humble, riding on a donkey*. It's not even His own donkey. Or is it? Does it not by right belong to Him who created it and gave it to man to use for a while? But He would not claim that right. He claims no rights. He comes to serve. He comes to die.

***“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”*** A beast of burden. You know, Zechariah didn't really need to add that little detail. Everybody knows that's what a donkey is. But with these words, Zechariah wants you to know, as He knew, that the real beast of burden here is the one on the donkey - the Lamb of God, come to carry His cross. The Lamb of God come to carry your sins. The Lamb of God come to carry you through death to life again.

All this is the reason for Christmas. The reason for Jesus' birth. The reason why we will spend the next four weeks preparing to celebrate that day. It's a big deal, as it should be.

But it's not Christmas yet, so today we're in the crowd, watching Jesus enter Jerusalem, standing side by side with folks like Zacchaeus, Lazarus, Jairus, and all those unnamed folks that Jesus helped. Standing side by side with the lepers cleansed by Him, the blind given sight by Him, the deaf made hearing by Him, the sick healed by Him, the lame given strength by Him, the sinners forgiven and accepted by Him. All of them crying out ***“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”*** They welcome this king who had already established His rule in their lives, His rule of mercy and love. For how could they not cry out? How could they not welcome Him who had done such great things for them?

And today we're in the crowd, watching Jesus enter . . . here. For still today He comes humbly to us too, riding not a donkey, but words and water and bread and wine. Coming to serve and to save through these; to come to us with His forgiveness using these vehicles which are as unlikely as a donkey and cross. To the human eye these look like nothing, or even less - utter foolishness. But no less than the cross, these are His thrones today, the places He puts Himself for you.

So we too today, as part of the crowd, will cry out these words. We'll join *the angels and archangels and - yes - all the company of heaven*, crying out: ***Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*** For your king comes to you today, into your heart, there to rule, there to reign.

But as you know, that's not the end of the story. As you know, soon there were other voices in Jerusalem, that cried out not **Hosanna!** and **Blessed!** but **Crucify!** How quickly everything changed. Jesus knew that it would, that the shouts welcoming Him would soon turn against Him. As I've said, that's why He came.

And it's why He is still coming to you today. Because how quickly your shouts change, and your hearts - like mine - change. We welcome Him here, and then we leave and what happens? Another ruler rears its ugly head. And instead of being ruled by love, we're ruled by sin. For the Christians in Rome that St. Paul was writing to, it was **orgies and drunkenness, sexual immorality and sensuality, quarreling and jealousy**. Why would they bow before Christ their King one moment and then bend their knees to these the next?

But before you start feeling all superior, *what is it for you?* What sins turn your hearts and capture your thoughts? Is it these or other sins? These, or maybe for you its anger and bitterness, or pride and selfishness, or greed or covetousness, or even despair and self-pity. Do you close the gates to your heart against Him who would enter there, not wanting to let go of your sin, your pleasures, your control? Or are you too busy to welcome Him when He comes to you - too busy to pray, to read His Word, to repent? Or are you too busy telling Him what to do and not listening to what He has done for you, or looking for a different kind of king, and a different kingdom, one *of* this world. *What is it for you? How do you crucify your king?*

However it is for you, know this: your crucified king did not stay dead. And He comes again for you - not for vengeance, but to forgive. To dethrone those tyrants of sin that would rule you, and be your real king, a good and kind king, a serving and giving king. And so St. Paul told the Christians in Rome, *now is the time to wake up from sleep, from sin. Now is the time to live in the light, not in the dark. Now is the time to cast out the works of darkness and put on the armor of light*. Now is the time to repent and welcome your king who comes with forgiveness, for **salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed**.

Nearer, closer, with every passing day. We see that with the stores, counting down the shopping days 'til Christmas, and with our Advent wreaths and calendars as we count down the days and weeks 'til Christmas, which is going to come before you know it! So too our salvation; our Saviour, Paul says. For our King is counting down, too. Counting down the days 'til He comes again in glory, to take home His bride, His Church. *You*.

For many, these days before Christmas are so filled with activity and all the preparations that need to be made. One pastor I read said that these days are filled with *Marthazillas* - people so busy and so filled with concern. If that's you, this season of Advent says stop and sit for a moment. For your King comes to you today humbly, to help and give you

peace, to embrace you with His love, to forgive your sins, to serve you and feed you and take care of you. For in fact He's made all the preparations; He's done all that needs to be done for you. And it's here for you. *He's here for you.*

So as we begin this new Church Year, as we begin this season of Advent, as we prepare to welcome our King who comes to us, consider again the words we just sang - traditional words we sing on this Sunday every year - that they be not just words you sing, but words that form you this season, and all your life. For we sang:

*Savior of the nations, come,  
Virgin's Son, make here - our Church, and here our hearts - your home!  
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth - and you, dear Christians -  
That the Lord chose such a birth - that He was born here below, that you be born from  
above. So that you too, both now and forever, may:  
Glory to the Father, sing,  
and Glory to the Son, our king,  
and Glory to the Spirit be  
Now and through eternity (LSB #332, vs. 1, 8).*

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