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“Disappointed?”

Text: Mark 11:1-10 (Isaiah 64:1-9; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9)

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

The first Sunday of Advent is the first Sunday of a new church year, which means this one thing: another church year has gone by and Jesus didn't come again. There have been almost 2,000 of them now and the church is still waiting. Every year we proclaim Jesus is coming back, and every year - so far - He has not.

Are you disappointed? Admit it - you're not, are you? Because if you're like most people, you really don't want this world to end. As bad as it is and as bad as the news gets, it's home, and the thought of it ending frightens you. So better to not think about it. Just keep on the best you can.

And also because you've got stuff to do and things you want to enjoy: kids and grandkids to watch grow up, careers to pursue, tickets to the game, and Christmas is coming - wouldn't want to miss that! For imagine finding just the right gift for that hard-to-buy-for person who has everything. You searched and searched and thought and thought and found just the right gift that is going to both surprise and delight that special someone . . . and Jesus comes again and you don't get to give it! What a bummer *that* would be, huh?

But the truth is, as much as the church speaks of Jesus' return at the end of the church year, we really don't give it much thought. We just expect things to continue as they have for so many years.

But it was not always so. The Jews in Isaiah's time - when another year went by they were disappointed that God did not rend the heavens and come down to save them and deliver them. And the Christians in the city of Corinth, Paul says, were ***eagerly waiting for the revealing*** - or, for the *apocalypse*, in the Greek - ***of our Lord Jesus Christ***.

So, what would change your mind? What would it take for you to be like the Jews of Isaiah's day or the Christians in Corinth, truly disappointed when not another year, but another day went by without Jesus coming again? Maybe if you were in prison, serving life with no chance of parole; or if you were on death row. Jesus coming again would be a relief and a release for you. Or maybe if you had a terminal disease, or a disease that won't kill you but just lingers and makes life tough - Jesus coming again would mean less suffering for you. Or what if you had overwhelming debt that you could not pay, or ISIL terrorism starts infiltrating our communities, or riots like what we saw in Ferguson start

burning *your* home and *your* business and *your* car. What would it take for you to pray “*Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! Come now!*” and really mean it?

Well, I’m not going to pray that any of that stuff happens to you. But every Advent we are reminded that all that stuff I just described is exactly the situation we are in *spiritually*, whether we realize it or not. You have a disease called sin that is eating away at you and has put you on death row. Satan is terrorizing you and your own sinful urges join in the spiritual rioting of anger, bitterness, and rebellion against God and against others. Jesus not coming again means we’ve had another year of amassing a debt of sin we cannot pay, of doing what our Lord has forbidden and not doing what He has commanded. And maybe that has caused you to look at yourself or look at the world and wonder: *When is it going to get any better?*

Advent tells us: when Jesus comes again. That’s what it’s going to take. We can’t do it, no matter how hard we try. Our elected leaders can’t do it, they’re sinners too (in case you haven’t noticed that!).

So in Advent, we turn our eyes again to the One who can. Not that we haven’t been looking at Him all year - we have, for forgiveness, for help, for strength, for wisdom, for the new life we need. All of that, yes. But Advent is different. Advent means “to come.” And especially this season we pray for that. *Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! Come now!* We sing it in our hymns: *O Come, O Come, Immanuel* and *Savior of the Nations, Come*. We pray for it in our collects, that the Lord would stir up His power and come, and that the Holy Spirit would come and stir up our hearts to repent. You may not pray for those things at home, on your own, so we pray them here. And fix our eyes on the One who has promised to come and save us.

And how we do that, how we look to the One who has promised to come again, is by looking back to when He did come, the first time - when He rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He came, as promised, though it took a long time. He came, as promised, and took your place on death row with the guilt of your sin. He came, as promised, right into the rioting madness of evil. He came, as promised, into Jerusalem that day and went to the cross. To give Himself and all that He is **for you**. To ***Hosanna*** you, to save you.

Now, the people then didn’t understand the significance of what Jesus was doing - not even the disciples. Just like us today, most of them were probably looking to be saved from the things and problems and fears of this world, not from their sins. They probably were shouting “***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!***” because they wanted Jesus to restore the kingdom of Israel and free it from Roman rule and be that kind of king. Just as we often want a Jesus who will be that kind of king and stop the rioting, stop the wars, stop the hatred, so we can live in this world in peace.

Now, it's not wrong or bad to want those things, but Jesus didn't come to be that kind of king or to give that kind of peace - for them or for us. His chosen mode of transportation made that obvious! Kings and warriors don't ride young, untamed colts or donkeys, they ride strong, well-trained stallions. His honor guard showed that, too - not soldiers but common people and children with coats and tree branches. But it was His chosen throne that shouted it the loudest - for earthly kings rule from bejeweled thrones, they don't reign from a cross. And so with colt, coats, and cross, we see that Jesus has come to do something quite different, something *much better*. To provide for us a peace and salvation not just for a time, for the eight or nine decades we have on this earth, if we're given that many, but peace and salvation forever.

And so in the midst of this world of trouble we sing our *Hosanna* too - to our King who comes to us in just as unlikely a way as on colt, coats, and cross - as He comes to us in the simple bread and wine of the Supper. It's not even really good bread and wine; it's ordinary at best. But whether it's on the donkey's colt or in the bread and wine it is (as we sang in the Introit) *your King coming to you, righteous and having salvation*. Your King with His forgiveness and with His life for you. So that in the midst of the rioting, wars, troubles, and hatred of this world, we have hope and we have peace - a peace that surpasses understanding and supersedes time and space. A peace with God to have now and that lasts forever.

So Advent proclaims: Behold, your King is coming to you - now! - just as He promised. And He is coming again - He will! - just as He promised. For He came, just as He promised. He is faithful.

And you who sang earlier *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?* come to meet Him in the same way as He came to meet you - not in your strength, but in humility; not in pride, but in repentance. Bring your sins for your King to take away and *Hosanna* you. And as you do that, this season, every week, and even every day, you are focused on the better, you are looking at your King, and preparing for the end, for that day when Jesus comes again as He promised. And as you do that you are looking, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, to the One who enriches, supplies, and sustains you to live now, to live in your vocations, to serve and to love until He comes again. That you be ready, if this be the year, if this be your final Advent. For one year, one day, it will be; He will come. And when He does, you will not be disappointed.

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