

Advent 1 / November 29, 2020

Mark 11:10

“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

A blessed Advent Season. Advent is the remembrance of how God sent the Messiah to establish the eternal kingdom He promised to King David. David wanted to build God a house of worship in Jerusalem. Instead, God told David He would build him a house, not a building of wood and stone, but a kingdom that would never end. In Second Samuel the Lord said, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” The promise was cast into doubt a half a millennium later, when the descendants of David were taken into captivity and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. It seemed God had forgotten His promise, but the prophets knew He had not forgotten and at the right time He would keep His promise.

Isaiah beseeched God to rescue Israel from captivity and restore the kingdom and the king. He cried out saying, “O that you would rend the heavens and come down....” God came down from heaven in the conception and birth of Jesus. In Jesus, God resurrected the fallen line of David. Through Jesus’ sinless life and sacrificial death, God established a kingdom of grace based on the forgiveness of sin. God calls all people into His kingdom through faith in Jesus. All who receive Jesus as Saviour enter His kingdom of grace in the forgiveness of sin and are promised a place in His glorious kingdom when He returns to make all things new. We rejoice in the kingdom of God which is our though faith. We look forward to its fulfilment at the return of Jesus. We begin Advent by joining the faithful of Jerusalem and saying, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.”

Advent is about the kingdom God, His righteous reign breaking into the world through the coming of Jesus. Advent is about the kingdom of God reaching out to the world, through the gospel call. Through the preaching of the law, the Holy Spirit convinces people of their sin. Through the proclamation of the gospel, God blesses people with forgiveness of sin and peace with Him. The kingdom of God is His righteous reign in the lives of all who believe and are baptized into His divine name; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God’s righteous reign is empowered by the Holy Spirit given to us in baptism, who leads us to live according to God’s righteousness. In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, “We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” The kingdom of God comes to us through the word of the gospel, the gift of Christ’s body and blood and the promise of forgiveness and life in our baptism. Advent is a season to consider the kingdom of God and remember that even now it is within us, around us and among us!

Advent is also about the Kingdom of God coming in its fulness with the return of Christ, the destruction of sin, death and the devil and the renewal of heaven and earth as the home of righteousness. God will again rend the heavens and come down, though not in humble form as He did with the conception and birth of Jesus; but with heavenly glory and a display of divine power. Jesus spoke of His glorious return often and at length, during the last week of His public ministry, before His dying and rising. In the gospel of Mark, He said, “And they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”

Advent is the church on earth spreading the kingdom of God, by proclaiming Jesus and salvation through faith in Him. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! Advent is God extending His righteous reign in the hearts of believers, as we walk more closely at His side in Christ. Advent is looking forward to the return of the King, the fulfillment of faith and dwelling forever in the presence of God in the resurrection of Christ. Today we join the faithful Jews of Jerusalem and the church of all ages and say, “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

At a glance, our gospel doesn’t seem like an Advent scripture. It has nothing to do with the birth of Jesus, which we associate with Advent. It takes place long after His birth, during the last days of His life and at the conclusion of His public ministry. Yet it is an Advent text. It shows us the coming of the king, as Jesus enters Jerusalem claims the everlasting kingdom promised to David. The prophet Zechariah looked forward to that day. Centuries earlier He said, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey.” The crowds recognize Him as the descendant of David and heir to the kingdom God promised His descendant. Inspired by

the Holy Spirit they shout and cry out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

They were blessed to see Jesus as the king anointed by God, because there were many pretenders to the throne before and after Jesus, who claimed to be the Christ. False Messiahs led many astray and brought death to themselves and to their followers. Forty years after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, false messiahs would lead the Jewish people into rebellion, bring ruin to the nation, destruction to Jerusalem and death to thousands. How did the faithful in Israel recognize Jesus as the heir of David, through whom God would restore his royal line and establish a kingdom that would extend to the ends of the earth and have no end? They recognized Him by His words of grace and by the powerful signs that accompanied His words. When Jesus spoke the sick were healed, the demon possessed were set free. When Jesus spoke the dead were raised, sinners were forgiven. When Jesus spoke, believers were given new hearts, in which God reigned through His Spirit. The faithful Jews in Jerusalem saw Jesus was the Christ, because He had the words of eternal life!

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the coming king, Jesus directed them to His words and the effect they had on human beings in body and in spirit. He said, "Tell John what you see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up and the poor have the good news preached to them." How do we recognize Jesus as our Saviour and King? We recognize Jesus as our King and Saviour through His word. The disciples confessed Jesus as the Christ, because He had the words of eternal life.

We need to remember this, because Jesus said that in the days leading up to His second advent there would again be false teachers and false Christs, who would lead many astray. We distinguish Jesus from false Christs and identify Him as our Saviour, by seeking and seeing Him in His word. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me." The scriptures testify to Him as the Christ, who laid down His life for our salvation. Isaiah said, "He was wounded for our transgression; He was crushed for our Iniquities." He calls us to Himself in forgiveness saying, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." In His word He gives us life with Him in time through faith and eternally in our share of His resurrection to everlasting life.

Advent is a time to watch and wait for the return of Jesus as King and the recreation of heaven and earth, as the home of God's righteousness. Jesus came into the world and into His kingdom, in a humble manner. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in a lowly place in an out of the way region of a mighty empire. He came into His kingdom by suffering death on a Roman cross. He will come again with power and divine glory; raise the dead and make all things new. When He comes the heavens will be rent asunder. In Revelation, St. John saw the sky roll up like a scroll and the mountains removed from their places. Every eye will see Him! All those who rejected Him will know who He is and what He has done for our salvation. In the letter to the Philippians, St. Paul says every knee will bow, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

We watch and wait for the fullness of the Kingdom of God, by seeking Jesus in the Scriptures and receiving His grace in the sacrament of His holy body and precious blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sin. We watch and wait for the coming of Jesus and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, by returning daily to the promise of our baptism in repentance that the Spirit might cleanse us of sin and empower us to walk in newness of life. We watch and wait for the full glory of the Kingdom of God, by looking beyond the troubles of these times and the afflictions of our lives to the inheritance of life promised us in Christ, which we will receive in its fullness at His return.

We wait and anticipate Jesus' return remembering the words of St. Paul who said, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." We wait by fixing our hearts on Jesus. We watch by seeking Him in His word, receiving Him in the sacraments and remembering His promise, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." At Advent we remember His first coming and look forward to His second coming. We join the faithful of all the ages and say, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" In Jesus' Name. Amen