

Advent Promises And the Patient Church
Matthew 21:1-9

TEXT: *As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

It's what Advent is all about: Promises from God and the patience of those who profess to believe them. But patience is not in the vocabulary of the Old Adam. That glaring sin of impatience is evident from the time we enter this world as little children who want what they want right now. Even in old age, the tried and tested Christian may bear his cross with the prayer: "When will the Lord take me to heaven?" Advent is the history of a patient Church, that is, the people who believed the promises of God and patiently waited for their fulfillment.

Today's Gospel Lesson may seem strange for the First Sunday in Advent. Advent is the kick-off for the season of Christmas. This text is usually read on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem to suffer and to die on the cross. The sad irony is that as He rode through the city gates of Jerusalem to the cheers of the people: ***Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!*** ...within a few days He would stand before the crowds of his own people calling for His crucifixion.

Only His Church, that is, those human souls in whom the knowledge of how Jesus is King and Savior, understand all this. And yet it we are required to wait patiently for Him to fulfill His promise. In order to do this, the Church must know what has been promised by God. Advent is our time to review these promises of God. The Palm Sunday event reminds us that Jesus our King has now saved us and rules His church until He comes on Judgment Day.

The Old Testament prophets reveal that God's Savior would be a king. While there was no king when Adam and Eve sinned except God their Creator, the Lord's confrontation with Satan was with the Word: ***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*** Ge 3 This was threat of a mighty king, a warrior, who would defeat the great Satan. The threat to Satan was a promise of hope to Adam and Eve.

Two thousand years later the Lord told Abraham: ***... this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you***

very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. Ge 17
Abraham's great-grandson Judah would be revealed as the one of the twelve sons of Israel from whom the Savior would descend. With that revelation the Lord declared: *The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.* Ge 49 Listen for this passage during the Christmas Season because that future king would be Jesus.

Then there was the great King David, a descendant of Judah, who sat on the throne in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, David a mighty warrior was not the King who would save mankind. In fact the Holy Spirit moved the pen of King David to write: *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.* Ps 110 No wonder there was excitement among the people of Jerusalem when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday! Here He was! *Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!*

Like little children who are impatient and cry out, "I want it now!", these people who welcomed the Lord Jesus were crying out: *! Hosanna to the Son of David! ...Hosanna in the highest!* Hosanna means "save us NOW!" But how disappointed they were when they crucified their king! It wasn't the kind of 'SAVING' they were looking for.

What are we looking for in the Advent of King Jesus? What are we looking for in those blessed promises and assurances of the forgiveness of our sins? Some want and expect more from God. So many expect more than what we deserve. Like little children throwing a fit we also whine and whimper over life's hardships and troubles as if we deserve better. We grumble and complain like the ungrateful Children of Israel who had to spend 40 years camping in the Sinai wilderness because they were impatient with God and His servant Moses.

What is God's Church looking for? You are members of the Church of Christ and you are looking for only ONE THING that our first parents Adam and Eve knew that they did not deserve. We are looking for the Lord's coming to take us to heaven because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation! We know we do not deserve even one second of His grace, but we have it, forever, in Jesus.

Hosanna! He HAS saved us now! And until we get to heaven, Jesus, our Lord and King rules His Church until His return on Judgment Day.

Zechariah: *Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*" What was this to mean? God wanted the Old Testament Christians not to look for a typical king. Even though the great King David, who in many ways was meant to typify the Christ, even David could not be a "gentle" king. So when Jesus rode into Jerusalem in fulfillment of this ancient prophecy, riding a donkey colt to the cheers of the people, they were learn from Jesus trial and crucifixion what Zechariah's message of a GENTLE KING was about. It was about the Almighty Triune God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, coming to a fallen creation because of a love that surpasses all understanding and giving the Father's only Son to be the sacrifice for all sins. That is the gentleness and humility that won our salvation contrary to all that any mind could ever conceive.

That gentle love that still comes to us to this day through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament rules His believers, the Church, and guides and keeps us until that Last Day when Jesus comes again in Glory to judge all the living and the dead.

Until then, our King continues to rule us with His love in a strange way. It is in a fashion that requires great faith and also surpasses all understanding. Jesus, in His grace and wisdom declares: *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ... What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?* Lu 9 Does this sound like the kind of King anyone would want to follow? Only you know what this means since you have seen our King win our salvation by His cross. Only you know this love of God that would only give the believers of His Kingdom their respective crosses, day in and day out, for the perfection of our faith and to keep us focused on our Lord. Only the God who loved us so much as to die for our sins would work so wonderfully in each of our lives so that as the Bible says: *... we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Ro 8

What have been, or are today, the crosses our Lord has laid on your particular shoulders? The patience of faith is our humble acceptance of our Lord's dealings with us as good, even though we do not understand. The patience of faith is to rely COMPLETELY on God rather than on our own reason and strength. The patience of faith is accepting whatever evil others may throw at us, knowing that our Lord may even permit them to injure us while He purifies us like gold. The patience of faith is to set aside our own ambitions and desires to except the disappointments that our own hearts did not expect to happen. The people of God's Church are not occupied with "the self" at all, but seek to trust only in our Lord's gracious promises which He has not, does not nor ever will fail to keep!

All this is taught us by the power of God's Holy Spirit as we hold patiently to all our Lord's Advent promises. Amen