

Rev. Danny Mackey
First Sunday in Advent
November 28, 2021
Matthew 21:1-9
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

Our world is broken. Has been ever since the Fall. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. Our world is broken, and so is humanity. None are righteous. No, not one. And so we cry out for justice. And, if we can’t get justice, we call out for vengeance. But we are left in unrighteousness. Families and towns and nations are broken because they all are made up people. Made up of unrighteous sinners. Sinners ever bent inward.

The prophet Jeremiah sounds the call for Advent. He speaks out to us in our broken world: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.” God promised that the King would come.

What will this King be like? What will He do? He will be wise. He will do justice. He will make sure that things are righteous. He will fix this broken world. He will make things to be the way they ought to be.

That’s what we see in our Gospel from St. Matthew. 600 years after Jeremiah, Jesus of Nazareth rides into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, on Palm Sunday. He is the promised Christ, the coming King. That’s the first point of our lesson. That’s why the apostle Matthew quotes the prophet Zechariah from about 500 years before Christ’s first advent. And the second point of our lesson is that the people believe the promise. They see Jesus riding on the donkey—riding in meekness and humility—and they believe, “This is the Christ! He’s David’s Son. Jeremiah and Zechariah were right. He’s our King! Thanks be to God!”

Jesus is the promised King. He came to teach humility. He came to give justice. He came to make people righteous. Christ came to be all these things. To win for us salvation and forgiveness. To fulfill all the Scriptures spoke of Him. This is just what Jesus does when He enters Jerusalem.

It’s not what our broken world expects. Those shouting hosannas had something else in mind. Many expected Jesus to cast off the hated Roman rulers. But Jesus doesn’t lead a riot

or a revolution. Many expected miracles galore. But Jesus, who reigns wisely, doesn't do that. Instead, He goes to the Temple and teaches. And then He goes to the cross. And the world is confused. The world even mocks. They still do that today. Our broken world doesn't why we celebrate Christmas. For our broken world, the coming of our King should mean everyone gets a prize. "You get a car, and you get a car, and you get a car!" Our broken world thinks the King should fix the supply chain problem or lower the price of gas or cure the pandemic. Our broken world thinks that the coming King isn't concerned about what you believe about Him. What's Christ got to do with Christmas? Happiness matters, they say. Gifts matter. Our broken world is content to have its parties and festivities, and then pack up what passing thoughts of an infant laid in a manger they had until next October when they can start making a profit off it again.

But our Christ and King never acts the way our broken world wants Him to. He comes humbly, mounted on a donkey. When Christ enters Jerusalem, He doesn't come riding a warhorse. He doesn't lead a host of zealots ready to storm Pilate's quarters, slaying Romans. No, He comes humbly. Instead of heading to the Governor's palace, He rides His donkey to the Temple. His focus is upon God and prayer, upon sacrifice and forgiveness.

Christ our King brings justice. Not the justice our broken world craves. Punishing people harshly and severely. No trial needed. No seeking of truth. Just punishment. Rather, our King brings true justice. He slays no one. He punishes no one. Except Himself. He goes to the cross to see justice done. To see the sins of our broken world punished in Himself. When you behold the cross, you see Christ Jesus executing perfect justice. Justice done by the King. Justice as He takes upon Himself the sin of the world.

Christ our King brings righteousness. Not a righteousness our broken world expects. Righteousness, for our broken world, means to conform to the way they want us to be. Do what they expect. Bow to their increasing demands. Comply and be righteous. The broken people of Christ's day expected a righteous world would be ruled by them. And all the other peoples of the world would acknowledge their supremacy and superiority. But that isn't the righteousness Christ brings. When He wins for us forgiveness on the cross, He also pours out His Spirit upon us, making us truly alive. Christ's righteousness isn't that He makes things they way we want them to be. Rather, He comes to us and makes us to be the way God wants us to be. He fixes our brokenness, pulls us away from our own sin,

strengthens us to resist temptation, makes us to be those who show forth love—makes us humble and just and righteous by the power of His Word.

What Christ did then, back on Holy Week, is the same thing He does for us today. He shatters our broken expectations of Him. He shows us indeed who God is and God's great love for us. He directs us away from our broken thoughts and desires and toward Him. He gives us His Word. His promises to meditate upon it, to think about it, to talk about it with one another. He directs us to worship, which focuses not on ourselves but upon God and His love for us. He directs us to a life of service, where we care for our neighbors, show them love, try to meet their needs. This is humility. Focusing not on ourselves but on our God and our fellow human creatures. This is precisely what our Lord does when He rides into Jerusalem on that donkey. When He comes to us in His Word. Our humble Lord teaches us humility.

And Christ gives us justice. Our broken world still expects justice to be about slaying our enemies. About the neighbor who wronged me will get the due punishment for His crime. About getting even. Christ, however, gives us justice. He gives us justice through His gift of Baptism. He declares, "I will slay your enemy, your true enemy, which is your desire to sin. Behold My justice as I drown your sins and your Old Adam by water and the Word."

Baptism is true justice—all that it entails. At your Baptism, God Almighty joined you to our Lord's crucifixion. He joined you to Christ's own death as a guarantee that when Christ died for the sin of the world He died for your sins. The cross is when justice was done. To Him. Also for you. God's justice means you have forgiveness on account of Christ. Your sins washed away. Solely because Christ Jesus is the King who does justice, who gives out justice, and who does everything that's needed to make sure justice is done. He is both just and the justifier.

And, of course, Christ makes us righteousness. Our broken world is selfish, bent on itself. Christ lifts up our heads and directs our eyes toward Him in faith and in fervent love toward one another. Christ makes us to be whom He created us to be in the first place. This He accomplishes through His Supper. Coming to us in His body and blood, He forgives us our sin, strengthens our faith, and fills us with His love so that we might do righteousness. He equips us to show forth His love in the coming week. To love as He has loved us. To forgive as He forgives us. To serve as He serves us. That's what God accomplishes through

this blessed meal. Without it, you've got scant little to give others. With it, you can love your family and friends, coworkers and classmates—everyone with whom you come in contact—you can love them in righteousness.

Whenever Christ comes, He teaches us humility, He gives us justice, and He makes us righteous. And the season of Advent, which we begin today, is nothing else than a call to these things. Our broken world would have us be distracted and disinterested to Christ. But our Lord is patient with us. He calls us to watch and wait for Him. He came once in humility to deliver us—which we celebrate and remember at Christmas. He comes now, continually and constantly, in His Church to deliver us from sin and to strengthen us to love one another. And He will come again, when He will take us from our broken world and to the totally perfect and righteous world to come.

In Jesus' name.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ + Jesus.