

Matthew 21:1–9
Ad Te Levavi (Advent I)
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
November 27, 2022

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new church year. As we begin this new church year, we thank the LORD for guiding us this past year and we pray His blessing on the church year to come. We are reminded that the King of kings and Lord of lords is coming soon. May He grant us patient endurance to hold fast to what we have, that no one may seize our crown as we await our King's return to judge the living and the dead. With the old church year behind us, we repent of our many sins committed this past year. With the new church year before us, we pray for that newness of life that comes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the forgiveness He purchased for us. Now is the time to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that we might be exalted when our King arrives.

The name of this season, "Advent," comes from the Latin word meaning "to enter," "to come into," "to arrive." Advent is all about preparing for the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ: He came to His people in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and then in the flesh over 2,000 years ago as a baby in Bethlehem. He comes to us today in the Word of God and in the Sacraments. And at the end of the world, Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. The Gospel text for the first Sunday of Advent is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, which emphasizes that our King, Jesus, comes to us in humility: at Christmas as a baby, at the cross in His suffering and death, and in this congregation, where our Lord comes to us in His Word and in His Sacraments. Our LORD comes to us in humility because His ways are not our ways. The

world seeks power and might, but the power of God is made perfect in what is considered weak and despised by the world.

There's not much weaker than a newborn baby. A child can do nothing for itself. That's what parents are for. A baby must be fed, changed, comforted, moved from place to place—on its own, a child is completely weak and helpless. And yet it is as a baby that our King decided to enter this universe, coming to us in humility. As the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus is the Lord of creation. The earth and everything in it belong to Jesus because He is the maker of all things. Jesus is the LORD of hosts, the King of glory (Ps 24). By Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:16–17). At Christmas, we celebrate the arrival of our Creator into His creation. Jesus came down from Heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man, for us and for our salvation. The creator joined Himself with His creation in order to redeem it from sin, death, and the Devil. Most would expect something grand, a spectacular entrance for such a dignitary, but no, our Lord comes in the humility of a little child.

And the reason our LORD came to earth in humility as a baby was to die in humility on the cross for the sins of the world. At the start of this new church year, our Gospel text begins at the end of the story to reveal to us the purpose of Christ's birth. Jesus was born so that He could die. Our Lord entered Jerusalem one last time, where He would be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, who would condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, before rising again from the dead on the Third Day. Jesus drew near to Jeruslaem and sent two disciples ahead to fetch a donkey and her colt. Jesus would ride into Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah: "Behold, your king is coming to you,

humble, and mounted on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.” Jesus enters Jerusalem as He entered this world: humble and lowly, His true glory concealed from those who look upon Him.

And so, too, does the Lord come to us today and until the end of time in lowliness and humility in the Word and in the Sacraments. Our Lord comes to us in the words of the Bible, which to the rest of the world looks like any other book. Our LORD wraps Himself in the swaddling clothes of Scripture so that we can grasp Him in faith. In the words of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, our LORD reveals Himself to us. There He tells us everything we need to know for our salvation and life.

In Holy Baptism, the LORD who wrapped Himself in human flesh and blood wraps us in His own flesh and blood. In Baptism we put on our LORD Jesus Christ as a garment, and so we become God’s children. Our eyes see the humble water, yet we know it is more than water. This is living water because it is water combined with God’s Word and promise.

In the Lord’s Supper, too, our LORD comes to us with His body and blood in all humility, under the humble forms of bread and wine. Our senses perceive bread and wine, yet we know from God’s Word this bread and wine are much more: the cup of blessing that we bless is true communion with the blood of Christ. The bread that we break is a true communion with the body of Christ. The bread we eat is Christ’s body, though hidden from our sight. The wine that we drink is Christ’s blood, though hidden from our senses. As our Lord wrapped Himself in human flesh and blood, in the words of Scripture, and in the waters of Baptism, so does our Lord come to us every week hidden under the bread and wine until He returns on the Last Day.

The crowds shouted: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” We cry out in humility: “Hosanna,” which means,

“Save us, Lord!” Before we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we sing with the crowd those words of Psalm 118: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” We acclaim our King as He comes to bring us salvation in His body and blood underneath the bread and wine.

Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of our King, not only when we celebrate His arrival at Christmas, but everytime our Lord approaches us in His Word and Sacraments. Our King, Jesus, comes to us in humility, and so we prepare to meet Him by humbling ourselves. A new church year is an appropriate time for new years’ resolutions. Here are some ideas you might consider to help prepare yourself to humbly receive the King of kings as He comes to you in humility, both this Advent season and beyond.

The most regular way our Lord comes to us is in the reading of His Word. The Bible is so readily available today people forget that God’s sacred Word is a treasure that excels all the riches of the earth. So many Bibles remain on the shelf or sitting on the table gathering dust when they should be read daily in our homes, not just at church. If you’re not already reading Scripture regularly, this new church year is a good time to start. Traditional Advent practices also include fasting as a way to allow more time for study of God’s Word, and as a reminder that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:3). The Bible is how our King, Jesus, humbly comes to us every day of the year. And as we approach our Lord in His Word, it is fitting to humble ourselves in prayer. The Lutheran Study Bible and the Lutheran Prayer Companion both provide helpful prayers for before and after reading Holy Scripture. When we read the Bible, we pray that the Holy Spirit would open our hearts and our minds to receive God’s instruction in humility.

Another way to humbly receive Jesus, our King, is in proper preparation before receiving the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11[:28], the Apostle Paul tells us to examine ourselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup lest we become guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Jesus comes to us every Lord's Day with His body and blood under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins every Lord's Day. But our sinful human nature is constantly in danger of turning this glorious gift into a mundane ritual, just another part of the Divine Service every Sunday morning. In former years it was common for communicants to announce their intention to commune in order to first be examined by the pastor, because in examining ourselves, it is always easier to have someone help us.

Other helpful resources for self-examination include Luther's questions and answers for those who intend to go to the Sacrament, found on page 329 in the hymnal. It's helpful to periodically run through those questions and ask yourself: "Why am I going to the Lord's Supper?" "Do I know my sin and that I need forgiveness?" Those who receive Christ's body and blood in faith that they are thereby receiving the forgiveness of sins are truly worthy and well-prepared. Another helpful practice is to pray before and after receiving the Lord's Supper. You can find such prayers on the inside cover of the hymnal.

As we enter the season of Advent, the beginning of another church year, we prepare to humbly receive our King, Jesus Christ, in concrete ways. Just as our Lord humbled Himself by becoming man, and humbled Himself by dying for our sins on the cross, so does our Lord continue coming to us in humble ways: in His Word and in His Sacraments. As we begin this new church year, let us repent of our sins, turn to the Lord in humility and faith, and so receive the righteousness and salvation He comes to bring. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty

hand of God that we might be exalted when our King arrives. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Behold, your King is coming to you. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.