

Mark 11:1-10

“Coming to the Rescue”

First Sunday in Advent (Series B)

December 3, 2023

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Those who went before and those who followed Jesus 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!”** (Mark 11:9-10).

To the repeated chants of Hosanna, meaning: “*Save us now!*” “*Save us now!*” “*Save us now!*” Jesus rides into Jerusalem. Now, today’s Gospel reading may seem odd, since today isn’t Palm Sunday; today is the First Sunday in Advent. But it does make sense when you ponder it a bit. Advent means “coming.” And why did Christ come? He came to suffer and die our punishment. He came to save His people from their sins. He came to rescue us from our evil foes: Satan, our own sinful nature, and the fallen world.

With the chants of **“Hosanna in the highest,”** the crowds are shouting the right words to Jesus, but do they truly understand the meaning of Christ’s Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem?

Knowing the expectations of the people, those shouting **“Hosanna”** likely have the wrong vision of their triumphant King. Yes, they desire a savior, but a savior from what? Most likely, the crowd expects Jesus to save them not from themselves – *not from their sins*, but from the despised Romans. They wanted to return to the glory of the era of King David.

Everyone needs a king. Even if you don’t think you need a king, you need a king. These Jews desired a powerful earthly king as their savior who, again, would lead them back to the glory days of Israel and Judah.

Now, as Americans, we tend to value our individual freedoms and our right to self-determination. We even celebrate our independence from a king. But from heaven’s perspective, we all need a king, a good king. You see, without a good king, left to us, all we like sheep have gone astray, everyone turns to his own way. Without a king, left to us, we live in darkness. We wander around aimlessly. Without a king, left to us, we invent ways to oppose the Creator and to harm our neighbor by making war with each other. We all need a good king who will gather us together and rule over us.

These Jews shouting “*Hosanna*” wanted a king to save them. And we want a good king to save us. The good news is that we have been provided with such a King.

Even when we have been provided with the good King, history has shown so many self-appointed messiahs and messiah wannabes. Now, some of them have turned out to be rather harmless, while some others have turned out to be murderous and tyrannical. But they all have one thing in common: they were all fake.

We all need a genuine savior. We all need a genuine messianic King. But so often, what we want is not what God has given us. So often, what we want is to select our king for ourselves. Our sinful nature wants a king who always agrees with you. Our sinful nature wants a king who never questions your desires. Our sinful nature wants a king who will never ask you to repent.

Oftentimes, we, like the first century Jews, are looking for the wrong king. But the good news is that God has given us the genuine King. He has given us the King we need. This messianic King is a humble King riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus of Nazareth is the One whom God the Father appointed to be the King of Israel even before the creation of heaven and earth. Jesus is the son of David, and yet David’s Lord. The King of the Jews is the messianic King for the world. And He is the messianic King for you!

Even if this crowd doesn’t fully comprehend what is happening, this crowd was sure anxious to see Jesus. You see, the word had spread on what Jesus had recently done. This Jesus is the Man who opens the eyes of the blind. This Jesus is the Man who raised Lazarus from the dead. The crowds thought, “*Could it be? If He can feed thousands, give the blind sight, give the deaf hearing, give the mute speech, heal the sick and raise the dead, why couldn’t He also get rid of the Romans?*”

But what most didn’t realize is that this Jesus is not just a bread king and a miracle worker. This Jesus is Yahweh in human flesh. This Jesus is God. And God is unchanging. God does not change to our desires. He gives us what we truly need.

As we – *and the first century Jews* – may have our own presuppositions on who the savior ought to be, Christ rides over those presuppositions.

As Emmanuel – *God with us* – Jesus does the unexpected. He accomplishes what is truly needed. He shows that He is the Master of Creation by riding a donkey that has never been broken in. Normally, an unbroken colt is difficult to ride, but not for Jesus.

He is the Master of Creation. At a casual pace, He rides this donkey into Jerusalem as the crowd eagerly puts their cloaks on the road along with palm branches.

Jesus enters Jerusalem with simple dignity. He's riding no warhorse or chariot. Still, the crowds saw in Jesus their hope for salvation and deliverance. Again, even if they didn't truly understand what was happening, they were chanting the right words: ***"Hosanna! Save us now!"*** For Jesus came to rescue them. Jesus came to rescue us. He came to save.

Here, Jesus rides over our wants and gives us what we truly need. He's riding into Jerusalem to give His people true rescue: the forgiveness of their sins. He rides into Jerusalem so that we would be declared righteous. He is riding to our rescue.

As we begin the new church year, we remember why God took upon Himself our human flesh in the first place. Jesus came to rescue us from our sins.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He knew second by second what His week would become. He knew He would be turned over to death. He knew He would be stripped, whipped, beaten, and adorned with a crown of thorns. He knew He would be enthroned by being nailed on the cross of Golgotha. He knew His disciples would flee. Yet, Jesus, knowing He would be put through pain, misery, and death, did it anyway, so that by grace through faith in Him, you would be rescued from the powers of sin, eternal death, and hell.

As Christ breathed His last enthroned on the cross, Satan and his fallen angels believed they defeated God. They rejoiced. But their supposed victory was short lived, for Jesus rose from the dead three days later. Sin was overcome. Jesus lives and death is conquered. Then 40 days later, Jesus bodily ascended into heaven, where He continues to rule all things on behalf of His Church.

Even right before Christ ascended, His most loyal apostles still didn't understand as they asked Him, ***"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"*** (Acts 1:6). Even if they didn't fully get it, they would in time. Jesus did not come as an earthly King, but as the heavenly King. He came so that we could live forever.

Also, as we enter this Advent season, we are reminded that Christ will come again. We are reminded that the trumpet will sound, and the voice of the archangel will be heard (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Meanwhile, we wait with eager expectation. This Advent season we look back at Jesus' first coming in Bethlehem and give thanks. We see the climax of that first coming with His enthronement upon the cross. We celebrate and ponder this mystery. The manger and the cross are made of the same wood. Jesus came to die. He ***“came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”*** (Matthew 20:28).

Gentleness, humility, and meekness marked His first coming, even as He journeyed to the cross. A crucifixion is the last place one would look for an enthronement, but here is Jesus, crucified for you. All your sins were laid upon Him. And by ***“His wounds, you are healed”*** (Isaiah 53:5). Christ, the good King, our rescuer, fulfilled God's Law completely.

Today, we walk by faith in the Son of God, who loves us and gave Himself for us. Yet, Christ is not away from us. He remains with us. He continues to rescue us. He is still our Emmanuel. His presence is hidden in Word and Sacrament: the Scriptures, water, bread, and wine. He takes these ordinary elements and uses them to join Himself to us. Today, He comes to us through ordinary means in His Means of Grace. But in time, we will see Jesus as He is. What is hidden today will soon be seen by everyone. His kingdom of glory will surpass every expectation in its power, splendor, and majesty.

In the meantime, Christ continues to come to our rescue as He is fully present with us in Word and Sacrament as He gives you forgiveness, life, and salvation! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +