

November 28, 2021
First Sunday in Advent
Luke 19:28–40

I.N.I.

Sermon preached by the Rev. Richard A. Lammert at Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN

Theme: “Your King is Coming to You”

In the name of ✠ Jesus. **Amen.**

As we begin the season of Advent, you know that we are preparing to celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as a tiny infant on Christmas Day. We prepare our hearts and minds to welcome the new-born infant into the world.

When we begin *any* story, we are usually curious how it will turn out. In most cases, we have a pretty good idea of the ending: the bad guy will be caught, the lovers will get married, the general will win the war. We also know the ending of the story of Jesus Christ.

The event of Jesus’ birth is not an end in itself. Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary in order to give His life as a ransom for many. The goal of His life was to go to Jerusalem and to be crucified for the sins of the whole world on the cross of Calvary. We get a hint of this in our Hymn of the Day without the stanzas saying it directly.

We also get a hint of this in our Gospel reading for today. We have the story of the *beginning* of the end, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as the week He would be crucified begins. We consider our reading with the theme “Your King is Coming to You.”

Our Gospel reading from Luke begins, “And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem” (Luke 19:28). Jesus was on His final earthly journey to Jerusalem. He had said to His disciples earlier, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise” (Mark 9:31), as we heard from the Gospel according to Mark several months ago.

Jesus was now coming from Jericho, near the Dead Sea, where he had been the day before. He was going up toward Jerusalem, since the city is on a hill. Jesus came to the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, the place that played such a great role in His last week before His crucifixion. Although Luke tells us that “Jesus went on ahead,” he clearly had several of His disciples with him, since Jesus sent two of them into the town of Bethphage at they drew near to Jerusalem.

The two disciples were to find there a colt, on which no one had sat, untie it, and bring it to Jesus. And if, Jesus told His disciples, someone should ask them, “Why are you untying it?” they were to answer, “The Lord has need of it” (Mark 19:31).

The disciples did as Jesus bid them, found the colt, and untied it. Someone indeed asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” The disciples replied as Jesus told them to do, “The Lord has need of it.”

If the disciples had been paying attention—and it is difficult to tell at times how much attention the disciples were paying, since they often went off on tangents where we observers have to ask “Do they know what they are doing or saying?—if they had been paying attention, they would have noted that events unfolded *exactly as Jesus said they would*. The colt was where Jesus said it would be, someone said exactly what Jesus had expected him to say, and the disciples responded in the appropriate manner.

Jesus had told the disciples that He would suffer and die. If Jesus was completely aware of the small details in this story, and knew precisely how they would play out, could He be unaware of any part of the enmity of the ecclesiastical rulers and their desire to kill Him? Not at all. The events of Holy Week would transpire completely with the will and knowledge of God. Jesus was never at the mercy of the Jewish rulers because of any inability on His part to resist them.

The events of Holy Week transpired exactly the way they did, because Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, had to die. The Son of God who took on human flesh in order to die for sins on the cross of Calvary had to present His body as a sacrifice for all people. God had promised it to Adam and Eve, and it had to happen.

But we don’t get that far in the story in today’s Gospel; this is just the *beginning* of the end. Here we have the disciples getting a colt for Jesus to ride on. St. Luke does not tell us the significance of this, but we know the Old Testament passage which points to this event.

Zechariah 9:9 says, “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, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The entry into Jerusalem shows Jesus as the king he was born to be: “Behold, your king is coming to you.”

We have here the first connection with the birth of Jesus, whose birth we now await. When Joseph took Mary with him to be registered, he went to Bethlehem “because he was of the house and lineage of David” (Luke 2:4). The angels made sure to mention this in their announcement to the shepherds: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

A descendant of David, born in the city of David—a *royal* descendant of David now showed Himself, in the triumphal entry to Jerusalem, as the King of the Jews. Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. Notice that Zechariah describes this person riding a colt not only as a king, but as humble. Jesus managed to be both royal and humble, a king born of kings, but also in humility facing the path ahead of him.

Zechariah also makes this statement about the coming king: “Righteous and having salvation is he,” according to the ESV translation; but I will translate this as “righteous and victorious is he.” Jesus was righteous, as the sinless Son of God; but

He was also victorious. We would not see—rather, the disciples would not see—the victory for another seven days, on Easter Sunday; but Jesus was already victorious.

God the Father or Jesus Himself had prevented Satan on numerous occasions from ending Jesus' life early. But now was the time for Him to die, although with victory in sight and assured. Here are Jesus' words again: "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." You heard it—and God is in complete control.

When the disciples brought the colt to Jesus, they spread their cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on it. Other people spread their cloaks on the road as Jesus rode the colt. It was clearly a royal procession as the people proclaimed, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38).

But, who were these people who cried out? St. Luke says, "The whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God" (Luke 19:37). The people in the crowd were disciples of Jesus, certainly more than the Twelve. Jesus had sent out seventy-two earlier as His witnesses. There were undoubtedly others who had followed Jesus.

"Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias" (Acts 1:23) were certainly there. They were the two who were presented as possible replacements for Judas. The qualification was that they had been with Jesus from the beginning.

All these disciples—and probably many others—were proclaiming, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38).

You might realize that this cry is somewhat different from what you might hear from the other Evangelists. We need to keep in mind that this was not like a rehearsed Passion history, where everyone spoke in unison. This was a large group of disciples, who were crying out different things at different times. St. Luke picked out of the people's acclamation what fit into his Gospel.

The main shout was "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38). This is taken almost verbatim from the first half of Psalm 118:26: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" Some of the disciples connected our passage from Zechariah with this one from the Psalms, and gave acclamation to "the King" who was coming.

This was indeed a royal procession. Jesus, the Son of David, had come into Jerusalem, David's capital city, as the successor of David, the Branch of David, who would reign forever. The One who was born in the city of David was coming into His own.

St. Luke's research into the events of Jesus' life also showed him something else that the disciples cried out: "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38). Or, to give the order of the words as St. Luke records them: "In heaven, peace, and glory in the highest!"

Here, the two synonyms "in heaven" and "in the highest" bracket "peace" and "glory," providing a focus for the words in the middle: "peace" and "glory." Luke would certainly have caught the significance of these words. He is, after all, the only

Evangelist who recorded the words of the multitude of angels to the shepherds: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14).

“Glory in the highest” is the same, but “peace” is different. At Jesus’ birth, we have peace on earth; here we have peace in heaven. Earth and heaven are joined together in peace, in the person of Jesus Christ, as He enters into Jerusalem to make atonement for the sins of all people by His crucifixion and death.

The proclamation and promise of peace at Jesus’ birth now comes to its fulfillment, as Jesus bears the sins of the whole world. This is what Jesus was born to do: to bring peace from heaven to earth. This peace is for everyone, as the angel proclaimed at Jesus’ birth: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

Unfortunately, not everyone wanted that peace. “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples’” (Luke 19:39). This is the last word of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Luke. There are certainly references to the “scribes” (Luke 19:47) or the “rulers” (Luke 24:20)—but never again are the Pharisees mentioned by name. They have made their final choice: “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”

Jesus responded, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out” (Luke 19:40). The Pharisees cannot silence the proclamation that Jesus is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Even if they silenced the disciples, the proclamation would continue. Inanimate objects—stones—would cry out to fill the vacuum.

Even more interesting is the note that Dr. Just makes in his commentary on Luke: “As the hearer may remember from the words of John the Baptist, stones were a metaphor for Gentiles” (*Luke*, p. 748). If that is the case, then we have another connection with the birth of Jesus.

The “good news for all the people” includes Gentiles, as well as Jews. Even the stones—the Gentiles, you and I—will cry out to acclaim Jesus as the One who comes as King, as the One who is righteous and victorious over sin, death, and the devil, as the One who brings heavenly peace down to earth.

And that proclamation we make even now, awaiting the birth of our King who is coming to us, not this time in royal robes and with majesty, but in swaddling cloths and in humility. Our Lord deigned to forgo all His divine rights in taking on human flesh and blood, all for our sake and for our salvation.

While we await the celebration of the first coming of our Lord to us at Christmas, *He* continues to come to us with His body and blood in Holy Communion, giving to us the very body and blood that He gave for us and shed for us on the cross of Calvary. Thanks be to God that our King who comes in the name of the Lord comes even now to strengthen us in body and soul to life everlasting.

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**