

## Your King Is Coming! Matthew 21:1-11 Advent1A16

There have been many signs of division in our nation over the last few weeks. But I believe that what is more important is what we all have in common, regardless of politics, age, religion, nationality, color, or language.

What could that be? Some people think it's the universal yearning for freedom and self-determination. However, history reveals that some are quite content to give up their autonomy for security. Not all people even have the same idea of justice—it's for some but not for others. Maybe it's that, deep down, all people are really decent and want what is best for the world. Not really. Some are just downright scoundrels and scalawags without a shred of moral decency in them. Evil is real, and universal. In fact, we are all sinners deserving of condemnation. How we differ is in the degree of destruction that our sins cause.

But everyone has this one thing *equally* in common. Whether you are rich or poor, young or old, male or female, decent or detestable, believer or atheist, Christian, Buddhist, Jew, Hindu or Muslim: Your King is coming to you. To every person, without exception, King Jesus was promised to reconcile sinners to their Creator. To every person, without exception, King Jesus came to bear a cross of punishment for the sins of every single individual on the planet. For every person, without exception, King Jesus was raised from the grave to announce that punishment for sin and the triumph over death was completed. To every person, without exception, King Jesus still comes to seek and to save those who are weary and burdened by the guilt of never measuring up. He comes to every person who seeks him and to those who run from Him, to those who believe He is the Savior and to those who don't believe they need saving.

In Revelation, John begins the letter to the seven churches this way: *Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come*. In other words, Jesus who came, will come again, is always coming. Advent is not a season to remember or anticipate an event but to receive Him who is always coming to us. And how do we do that?

The crowd in Jerusalem had it all right and all wrong. Yes, he was Messiah, the Son of David, worthy of the prayer, Hosanna ("save us"). But he wasn't going to overthrow the Romans as they thought. In fact, they would crucify Him and persecute his followers. He didn't come to set up an earthly kingdom, or political party, but to rule in the hearts and minds of those who set their eyes on a spiritual kingdom. To us, also, He doesn't promise a path different from his own. Therefore, we have no reason to expect a life of comfort or even a life at all.

About 50 years before Jesus was born Julius Caesar summed up an important victory against rebellious subjects. "Veni, vidi, vici," or "I came, I saw, I conquered." Seeing the disastrous results of His rebellious world, God sent King Jesus to come to the world and to conquer it--not with swords and arrows, but with his own sacrificial death and victory over the grave. Having redeemed and restored us with his blood, he rules over us as subjects willingly conquered by love.

Are we living as willing subjects conquered by His love? Do we continually welcome him into every part of our lives or reserve compartments where we sit on the throne and where the crown? What about our secret thoughts—the anger, lust, jealousy, bitterness, hatred? Does he rule there? Is what you do, watch, or listen to in private evidence that Christ has come to you and abides with you always? When tempted by gossip, insults, or rudeness does the Christ who has come have reign over your words and attitude? When loveless indifference tempts you to ignore the needs of others, does Christ's rule in your heart overcome that temptation?

If I have not yet stepped on your toes with these general descriptions of our common failings, then your sin is foremost pride and dishonesty. You are deceiving yourself. For how can any of us be proud before the only perfect Jesus, who came humbly on a donkey, carried His own cross, and died a humiliating and painful death? If we had any reason for pride, would he have come to us, not to make demands we could not keep, but to die for us because we could not?

Having come to earn our forgiveness in His death and resurrection, He still comes as ascended King to dispense that His forgiveness. He gives it from the baptismal font and the sacrament of the altar, from the ministers who speak it in His name, and from the pages of the prophetic and apostolic writings. Having come in a cradle, He keeps coming through all these gifts of His grace.

And he will come again, once more, not to bear sin, but to punish the sins of all those who rejected his first coming. Every person, without exception, will either have paradise or punishment, and that forever. As God's church we do not have permission or time to focus on our differences. For what is most important is what we have in common: Sin and death, certainly, but also the offer of Christ's free forgiveness and eternal life. Our King cares about eternity, and our King is coming. Let us be ready always and help others prepare as well. Amen.