

Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

“You know the time, that the hour
has come for you to wake from sleep.”

For, as St. Paul writes, “salvation is nearer to us now than
when we first believed” (Rom 13:11).

In fact, it is as near as this Word
which I preach into your ear from this House of the God of Jacob;

it is as near as this Font in which you began your journey
along the path that leads to eternal life;

it is as near as this Altar where your King comes for you
again today.

How shall we meet our King who comes
for us today with His gracious gifts and His rescue from sin and death?

Psalm 118 which is quoted in this morning’s Gospel reading
gives us the answer:

We lay our filthy garments before Him, we lift up our stony,
hardened hearts,

and we sing out with all the faithful who pray,

“Hosanna,” which means, “Save now...” Lord, save us!

Indeed, we pray many variations of this prayer on this first Sunday in Advent –

the prayer of beggars;

the prayer of lost and condemned sinners who can be nothing but given to by our gracious Lord and King who comes.

We pray, “Lord, have mercy on us” in the Kyrie.

We pray, “Hosanna, save us” in the Sanctus.

We pray, “Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins” in the Collect for 1st Sunday in Advent.

Yes – Lord, have mercy! Save us!
Rescue us from the threatening perils of our sins...

And what perils are those, exactly?

Is it the peril of shame, guilt, and failure that we can't seem to escape?

Is it the peril of pain and suffering in these last days?

Is it the peril of death itself and the descent back into the dust from which we came?

The answer is no, for these are merely signs, the warnings of the true peril of our condition...

For the “threatening peril of our sin” is, in fact, an everlasting peril –

the eternal, all-enveloping darkness of solitary confinement in hell where there is forevermore the weeping and gnashing of teeth –

the utter darkness that comes from having separated

ourselves from our Creator –

the bone-crushing solitude, the loneliness and desolation
that mark the final outcome of our insistent, unceasing individualism –

no relationship, no communion, no love— just you in the
darkness at the center of your self-focused, self-serving, idolatrous
existence, just the way your old Adam has always wanted it.

As the enemies of God through our
inherited sin,

we are continually choosing this darkness over the light,
walking in drunkenness and sexual immorality as St. Paul writes again today,

going the way of jealousy and quarreling,

serving our neighbor only when it serves us...

We know what our sin has done to us
and to those we were entrusted to love.

We know the misery and chaos we have brought upon ourselves
and the world around us.

And we know the judgment and everlasting hell we have
deserved, and just how terrible that will be –

which is why we come to our King who comes for us today in
the Name of the Lord.

We come for His rescue with the
prayer on our lips,

“Hosanna” – Lord, save us. Save
now!”

And He does... The Lord *does*
come today, not in judgment –

not as a conquering warrior-King on horseback to thrust the

sword of His all-consuming judgment into our hearts the way we deserve,
but humbly, hidden under bread and wine, much as He was
hidden under thorns and bloody wounds on the cross.

He comes like a peasant on a donkey,
hidden in foolishness,

hidden in humility,

hidden in plain sight, that all who believe in Him might
come to receive the rescue He brings.

Your crucified and risen Lord Jesus *has*
come for you today.

He *has* come in flesh and blood to deliver you from
the domain of darkness and to transfer you into His everlasting kingdom through
the forgiveness of all your sins (Col 1:13-14).

HE is your King who comes in the
Name of the Lord.

HE is the image of the invisible God
through whom all things were made.

In HIM, all the fullness of God dwells bodily,

and *through* Him you are being reconciled to God, the
blood of His cross now rescuing YOU from the threatening perils of *your*
sin and saving YOU by His mighty deliverance.

“Hosanna” – Lord, save us! Save now!”

How shall we meet Him, how welcome
Him aright?

“Let us come up to this mountain of the LORD –

Let us join our voices with all the company of heaven who
confess, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth; heaven and earth are full of

Your Glory.”

Let us unite our voices with all the faithful who cry,

“Hosanna” – Lord, save us! Save now!

And then let us complete the stanza
of that blessed hymn...

For what began as a plea for rescue now becomes a shout of
praise and thanksgiving for our deliverance:

“Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord –

Hosanna in the highest” (Sanctus)!”

As we enter upon this new Church
Year,

let us greet our Lord and Savior who
comes for us.

Let us call upon Him for His salvation,

and let us hear of His ways and walk in His paths.

For “you know the time, that the
hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

You know that your salvation is
nearer now than when we first believed.

So cast off the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:11).

Come to this altar and confess Him rightly who comes for you
in the Name of the Lord:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!”

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Preached by Pastor Holowach

*Sermon Text: Matthew
21:1-11*