

Sermon Advent 1 2021

November 28, 2021

Matthew 21:1-9

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Son of David, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read, especially these words: **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest”**

In the Old Testament lesson for this week we hear the prophet Jeremiah say, **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.”** It’s clear from those words that as Jeremiah speaks the Lord’s words, the Lord in them is promising that there will be this King given to Israel. This King will be the greatest of all kings ever. As we heard, He will reign wisely executing justice and righteousness in the land. Think about how our world needs to hear that message now.

We look out at the verdicts of various high profile court cases and it seems that in many of them there is division as to what justice properly is with regard to those cases. If people are acquitted many will call them justified and heroes while many others cry that justice has been left undone. If they are found guilty, many cry justice is being done, but others cry that there is injustice in this. There are pressures upon the courts to rule this way or that, and if they don’t violence will break out. What do we even know is just at this point? As I am often wont to do, I point to the uncertainty that we have in the midst of all of this as reporting has become so biased that the reporters will match their stories with what they expect should happen rather than with a clear exposition of the facts. Surely, the need for justice was just as prominent at the time of Jeremiah, and later at the time of Jesus as now. In fact, as we consider developing nations now, I think we can see a glimpse of what that would have looked like, where rulers grabbed all comforts for themselves and left their subjects to suffer hunger and thirst. This whole world cries in injustice and so cries for a King who will bring it.

Likewise, for the Israelites, hearing the promise that this King would save Judah and Israel would dwell securely. For the Judeans at the time of Jeremiah, there were threats all around, and for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, there were as well. In the North, Assyria would come and conquer. Babylon would come and overtake Judah.

And this continued for these people over the centuries. First the Assyrians and Babylonians, then the Persians, who at least let the people back to their land out of exile. Then the Greeks, and at the time of Jesus, the Romans. When would these people be free? When would this King come? When would there be this branch of David!

And as we hear that phrase, consider why the tie to David. David, the King who had brought about the greatest Kingdom of Israel, the kingdom that found its zenith in his son Solomon. There was peace throughout the land. There was worship in the Temple. The Israelites were given the fulfillment they had been seeking!

Of course, as we consider that, one thing we have to think about is the failing we see of every character in the Old Testament. I've mentioned this, but there is this pattern that a professor of mine in seminary pointed out beginning in Genesis 4:1. He said that as we look at that verse, where we read in English Eve saying, "I've begotten a man with the help of the Lord," we see in the Hebrew literally, "I have begotten a man, the Lord." Eve thought that this child she had birthed, Cain, as he would be named, she thought this was the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to her at the time of the fall into sin. She thought this child would be the Lord in the flesh, that he would be the offspring of woman coming to crush the head of the serpent and bring peace to the world.

Of course, Cain proves this wrong. As do the continued offspring from there. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. They all prove to have their failings. Moses too. He's the closest, but then he strikes the rock instead of just speaking the Word. Joshua, the judges, Gideon, Samson, Eli and all. Then the people get a king. And who do they get? They get Saul. Nope. He's not the one. Then David! The closest thing, faithful in so many ways, the man after the Lord's own heart. Well, except for that whole debacle, and we mean a catastrophic debacle with Bathsheba, as well as the tainting of his hands in the blood of war. Not him. And Solomon, such promise! The son of David literally! But no. As wise as he was, the temptations of the flesh still were too strong. And so, the prophets prophesied, there would yet be this Son of David to come.

And they spoke about Him like Jeremiah did. They promised that He would bring this justice, this peace, this utterly transcendent world where the lion would lay down with the lamb, and the child would place his hand into the adder's den with no consequence.

As the people gathered around Jerusalem and saw Jesus on the donkey fulfilling that prophecy from Zechariah **“Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”** Imagine their hope. Imagine their expectation. Here He is! The Son of David! **Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!** “Son of David, save us!”

And we see in Matthew, that his gospel has been setting us up for this moment in so many ways. He has shown that this Jesus is this Son of David. Matthew doesn't waste time with that. The Gospel according to St. Matthew chapter one, verse one, **“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David.”** The book, literally of the genesis of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. This is that king. He's that King as He is born, named Immanuel, God with us. He's that King as He is worshipped by the magi. He's that King as He heals the two blindmen right before our reading today in the twentieth chapter of the Gospel, they cry out “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” He's that King. And it seems the people see it. It seems the people are ready for this King. They are ready for this justice. They are ready for the salvation of Judah and for Israel to dwell in her own land.

But are they ready? The end of this Son of David shows us they're not. By the end of this week, they crown Him with thorns and nail Him to a throne of the cross. You see, when they met Him, they were confused about what this King's kingdom would look like.

Now, as I say that, I have to note something. I ordinarily make the point that they were expecting Jesus as this King who would bring an earthly kingdom to Israel, when His Kingdom is not of this world. And I think we have to understand that to be true. But as I was reading I was given a bit of nuance to that. A commentator I read made the point that we don't want to utterly spiritualize this kingdom as if it has no bearing on this world. Jesus' life, death, and even the resurrection and ascension show that there is still a connection between this world and the kingdom of Jesus. The commentator made the point that what the Jews calling upon Jesus that day were doing was to bring the expectation for that kingdom to come immediately. In a sense, they weren't ready for the King because they expected the King to operate on their timetable.

How true for us, no? As we are here in the first week of Advent, the time of year where we meditate on the coming of our Lord, first on His coming again to finally bring this fulfilled Kingdom, then on His coming at the first Christmas to complete all things

in preparation for that Kingdom, we have to ask ourselves if we do the same thing. Does our trust in the Lord waiver because we look around at the world and see injustice and discomfort and suffering? Do you see the hardship of the remnant of sin in this world and wonder what kind of King and Kingdom there finally will be? Or as we have so many things so good in our society, do you await the coming but hope maybe it will be a bit longer because things are so good here? Do you worry about that coming because perhaps Jesus will come as King of Kings and not carry you into that Kingdom? Or do you get so drawn into the temptations of this world that you don't consider that coming at all?

If you're honest, you see right away how we are those finicky people ready to crown Jesus, but ready to crucify Him days later. Hosanna to the Son of David! Save us, Lord! Save us!

Christians, be ready then for that coming. Be prepared, like we heard about last week with the virgins and their lamps. Avail yourselves of the good gifts of our Lord, His Word more precious than gold or silver, and His body and blood, holy and giving you forgiveness and holiness, life and salvation.

Be prepared also with adorning yourselves in holy living. Meditate on what Saint Paul says in the Epistle lesson. **Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light... Walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

And most of all be aware of the ways you too are unready like those in Jerusalem that Sunday who called out to Jesus, "**Hosanna to the Son of David.**" Be aware because as you see the ways you are not prepared you see how that word "hosanna," "save us," how that is so pertinent. That's just what we need isn't it? We need this Son of David to come. We need Him to save us. We need His sacrifice from His first coming. And we need the rescue He will bring to us when He comes again. That's our hope and our joy.

And that's what He promises to bring as King. He promises as that Son of David to carry you into that Kingdom where He will give perfect justice and righteousness. He will give you your own land. Not that of an earthly territory, but the land of the new heavens and the new earth. The land of His rule, His final Kingdom, where death, pain and suffering finally are no more. It will not be now. But it will be then. And He will reign over you in the fullness of His glory. In the fullness of His love. Amen.