

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT—AD TE LEVAVI

Text: St. Matthew 21:1-9

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

All that our LORD JESUS accomplished, He accomplished for one great purpose—that is, He accomplished fulfillment of God’s Law that all mankind might be saved. For the Law of God requires the death of a sinner. The demands of the Law must be paid in full, and this payment may only come in the form of flesh and blood. For the life of all flesh is in the blood, and as the author of the Book to the Hebrews records, “... *without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin].*”

For centuries this blood was the blood of innocent beasts handed over to be sacrificed for the sins of their masters. Yet, these animals and their flesh and blood, were only shadows of something far, far greater to come, for again, as the author of the Book to the Hebrews writes, “... *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” No! In order to accomplish this, the Law required the blood of the guilty; it required death for the one who owed payment for his debt of sin. It required the flesh and blood of mankind. Because “... *through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*”

It is for this very reason that our LORD took on human flesh. He came to pay the price we could not. For when it comes to the price for your salvation, your death would accomplish nothing. You would simply be repaying the debt you owed. For it is written: “*So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’*” Your debt paid, your life would be forfeit, having exchanged life for death and the fleeting pleasures that this world has to offer.

So, JESUS comes as not only as our LORD, but our SAVIOR. He comes to purchase our salvation by His death, to purchase our lives with His own, and when He comes again, He will come bringing the fullness of that salvation and life. Innocent beasts once died for their sinful masters; now the innocent Master, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, must die for His sinful sheep. He, who knew no sin, became sin for us, “... *that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” He, therefore, took into His own Body the curse of death, and having completely fulfilled God’s Law, died that we may live.

So, today, we ride with our LORD and SAVIOR into Jerusalem, and while the rest of the world is already celebrating Christmas and the birth of our LORD, we Lutherans are

celebrating His death until He comes. JESUS died and we live. In His Blood is our life. *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and [God has] given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood [of CHRIST] that makes atonement for the soul.”*

That, dearly beloved, is the purpose for JESUS’ first Advent, His first coming. This Babe is born to die. But we have sentimentalized His first Advent. It has become for us a cherub-faced Child with rosy cheeks, born in a cozy stall all aglow, with a warmth kindled by human hearts, as angels look on softly while singing Silent Night. It is a little drummer boy rum, pum, pumming, as we look on with tears in our eyes and sickly-sweet emotions tugging at our heart strings. It is a time to feed and clothe the poor so we can assuage our guilty consciences after ignoring them for the other eleven months of the year.

Even worse, it has become for us a time of gluttony and greed—of spending money and making money in a national economy that depends on Black Friday and Cyber Monday when all of mankind should be thanking God for the gifts of Good Friday. JESUS’ first Advent is now a time when the success of the holiday is measured by the number of gifts under a dead tree rather than the gift of salvation that CHRIST gave when He hung dead upon a tree.

Perhaps it is this sentimentalizing of our LORD’S first Advent that has caused us to ignore His continuing presence, His continuing Advent in water, Word, bread, and wine. For what hope, after all, is to be found in a helpless infant? Could the Salvation of all humanity really be born into a filthy animal stall? Yet, can hope be found in our empty human imaginings? We need only look around ourselves to answer that question.

Still, JESUS comes to us, nonetheless. No matter what we should choose to imagine about His first Advent; in fact, in spite of what we might choose to imagine, He comes. Through the preaching of His Gospel and the giving of His blessed Sacraments of Baptism, His Supper, and Holy Absolution, CHRIST JESUS comes to strengthen and preserve within you the faith He has given you.

Because you were not alive when JESUS walked and taught upon this earth, in these means of divine grace we participate in our LORD’S first advent. It is in these that we, born two-thousand years after His death, experience the first coming of CHRIST. And with His coming He brings with Him the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT as the waters of Holy Baptism are poured over you, making of you a child of God, dead to sin and alive to grace and salvation. Every day, from that day to this, JESUS has been coming to you, teaching, admonishing, strengthening, preserving, and saving you with His Word and His precious Body and Blood given and shed for you.

But for what reason has JESUS done this? For what reason would our LORD give up the riches, the beauty, and glory of heaven to become one with His creation? Why does the Potter become the clay? Why does the Shepherd become one with His sheep? Why would He suffer our punishment, die our death, and pay our debt? The answer: that mankind may be saved. This is and always has been His purpose, His plan, and motivation.

For *“God is love”* and love must have an object. Love does not exist in a vacuum. It does not exist for the sake of itself alone. No, love must have an object, and you, beloved children of the Most High God, are the object of His love, and it has pleased Him to die for you. All that He suffered, He suffered out of His love for you.

Now, as God’s Holy people, we await His final Advent on that great and final Day of His return. On that Day He will return not as the world’s Redeemer, but as the world’s Judge. And we, as His Holy people, will greet that Day with joy and singing, for we will have nothing to fear.

Our God has heard our plaintive kyrie eleison and our loud hosannas. He has heard our cry *“LORD have mercy”* and our cry *“Save us, LORD,”* and He who has not abandoned us, who did not leave us orphaned, but honored His promise to always be with us, will gather us together as a shepherd does his flock and lead us pass the shadow of death unto green pastures and beside still waters. On that day will be answered every *“Thy Kingdom come”* and every *“Come, LORD JESUS”* as we, His people, are gathered to Him and go to live with Him forever.

Until then, we wait for the Advent of our King. We wait trusting in the LORD who is the God of our salvation. We wait because we are Advent people. We wait, knowing that *“Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.”* We wait and lift our hearts to God who has shown us His mercy and granted unto us His salvation. We wait, for one day soon JESUS will come with a shout, and a great trumpet blast will shake the heavens and the earth. And we will be called, from the sleep of death or from this life, into the glory of our LORD to live with Him in blessed communion forever.

Everything that our LORD accomplished was accomplished for a reason—that reason is your salvation. Your King has come and He will keep His promise to come again. We sing our loud Hosannas—LORD save us! Our LORD JESUS has heard us and He has sent His reply. You have already heard it when you heard Him say, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

✠✠✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠✠✠

Rev. Raymond D. Parent II
Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church
Crestview, Florida
12/1/24 A.M.