

Jesus, both Humble King and Perfect Citizen

“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame, let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.”

The first Sunday of Advent is of hope. In this psalm, we have a clear expression of what “hope” means: To lift up your soul to God, to trust in Him, to wait on Him and His delivering actions. This is a psalm of great hope in God. That is, unless you are wantonly treacherous. For those who work against the Lord and break His laws, all that they may await is shame and undoing.

For those, like you and me, who are not whole heartedly a servant of the living God, the most we can “hope” for is the off chance that the king might be nice to us, but there’s no promise of that. At most, we can desire His love, or wish for it, because you and I, are at best, like the disciples in our text today.

That’s not so bad, right? They are crying out “hosannas” and declarations of God’s peace, but they praise Christ for His works. They still don’t yet get who He is and what His mission is; they praise Him because of what He has done, and not necessarily because of who He is—true God and true man, here to win for their sorry selves’ salvation. And yet their praise is delightful because they will get it, soon enough.

But more often than not, we’re not even like the disciples in our text today. Most days we pay lip service to Christ, while we enthrone a different king or queen. Money, sex, work, family, exercise, cleanliness, or control. All these, plus many more, receive our quiet but genuine praise as we rest in the satisfaction and the protection that they provide for us on a daily basis. We have pledged allegiance to these kings and queens, all the while the one and true and only king, He is drawing near.

In Advent we remember His first coming and we prepare ourselves to celebrate such an occasion, but we also look forward to His second and final coming. And as we prepare ourselves for

these, if we truly believed that Christ was on His way, then our misguided allegiances ought to cause a great deal of perspiration.

This should be the case, but our reading today, a text that feels so out of place in the church year, it tells us something remarkable about Christ that can sooth our fears. We see how He draws near to His people. In today's lesson and in this season of Advent we see His true character and this stirs up *hope*.

Christ, as He enters into Jerusalem where He will take His throne, He chooses the lowliest of means to set Himself apart as king—He certainly rides an animal set apart just for Him, but it is not one of speed or power or beauty, but a simple lowly colt, on which no one had sat. This is enough for the king who comes in humility. On this, He chooses to draw near.

And this isn't the first time that He has appeared both uniquely but humbly. In 4 weeks we will rejoice at His drawing near in His birth. Even now we might celebrate His hands and feet and eyes and ears being knit together, just like you and I were, and yet He comes set apart, born of the virgin Mary. His kingly entrance is both royal and yet nothing special. And even in the womb, He is drawing near, not only to this world but also to Jerusalem 30 odd years later. Here already He is set on entering the Holy City to take His throne.

And His coronation as king mirrors both His birth and His procession into Jerusalem. He will certainly be taking a throne like no other king's, and yet this is not by His power or His might, but by His submission to the will of the Father and the hands of sinful men. He will receive a crown of thorns and be set upon a cross, but by doing so He will ensure that He is king of the universe, of every atom that has and ever will exist; He is Lord of Mary and of the colt and of Pilate, of the disciples and kings and queens throughout all time, and He is Lord of you and me.

This King who took His throne by His suffering opened the door to His kingdom of paradise to all, and He serves this new reality to us Himself. Once He had given up His life and taken it back

again He didn't cry out "see what kind of love I'm willing to show you if you only listen to me. See what ultimate power I have, so you better bow down before me." Certainly He had every right to. He is surely worthy of the worship of every soul created, even of the stones and trees and oceans deep. He would not be demanding too much, but no, His humble, servant demeanor as king which characterised His time in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine continues to this very day, as He seeks to serve His righteousness and perfection to those very ones who have ignored Him as king.

He seeks us who have committed treason against Him, the king, and draws near to gift us with His love and His life. And He does it in the same unassuming, not overpowering ways in which He has always worked. He speaks His simple word and it creates faith in us. He chose water, the plainest of vehicles to carry His Word in order to wash away the filth of your sin and cleanse you even from death. He gives you of Himself hidden in bread and wine, so that we might be forgiven and trust in Him anew. Through these, He gives us the reason to hope.

In all of this, He who waited on the LORD with all His heart, trusting in God each and every moment and thus deserved God's good attention, gives us His faith, His trust, His hope, so that we may look to God with the assurance, the confidence, that He hears us and holds us. Our rebellion is wiped from the slates and is replaced by His faithful service. Our treason is replaced by His perfect allegiance and trust.

And He continues, serving us, forgiving us, and teaching us. In all this His work we learn more and more about who He is and what He has done and still does for us. He instructs us sinners in His way, so that as He draws near, in His birth, in His service today, and finally at the end of time, we may be sure that we are His, we are in His hands, and He has declared Himself to be our good and gracious king. At the end, He will come to execute justice and righteousness in the land, which means that at last, the righteousness we have been promised will be ours in its entirety. Then, the

Lord who is our righteousness will be seen with our own eyes and we will be like Him because He has served to us His very own life.

Therefore you do not need to worry. Not prior to confession in these days, each Sunday or Tuesday, whether He will be gracious to you this time, but you may be sure that the price has already been paid for your sins, and today's absolution is here to assure you that even this week's sins have been done away with.

Because Christ is the humble, servant King of the universe, our idea of hope may be changed because you have been changed, no longer treacherous and rebellious citizens in a kingdom but faithful servants of the king. We are not looking forward to something that might happen, for something that we would love to occur. No, Christ is all powerful and all knowing and what He has promised us is true because He has the power to do it and knows that it will be done because He had the humility to make sure the sacrifice in our place was completed—by His very own flesh and blood. So the forgiveness of your sins, your life eternal, your perfect righteousness, even though you cannot see these, your hope in them is concrete, it's sure, it is all but the reality of even today. There isn't anything else that needs to be accomplished. The only thing standing in the way of you and every one of His gifts is a couple of days.

Because Christ drew near in Bethlehem to make His way to the cross to die and rise for you, you may be sure, that everything that Christ has promised you in His Word is reality. Whether or not you can see it, you may hope in it; believe in it; trust it; know it—because He has promised it. Therefore you may pray, alongside Christ who prayed this perfectly, "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame, let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame."

Amen.