

**Advent Sunday**  
**29th November 2020**

+ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

**Matthew 21:1-13**

Last Sunday we celebrated the Feast day of Christ the King, and today we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Usually this reading is used on Palm Sunday, but it is also appropriate as we celebrate the First Sunday in Advent because we are looking forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas Day. The word advent is from the Latin '*adventum*' and means 'coming.' Advent precedes the Season of Christmas when we celebrate the coming of God the Son into human flesh as the Babe in a manger. Every time we say the Creed we proclaim that He was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary by the power of God the Spirit to be the Saviour of the world. But, as Christians, we also hold on to the promise that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again just as He said, and so in the season of Advent we are looking back to His first coming and forward to His second coming. We are living in a time between the two '*comings*' of our Lord, and realize just how different they are.

Looking back to Jesus' 'Triumphal Entry' into Jerusalem, the '*King of kings and Lord of lords*', doesn't seem outwardly to be this. He rides on a donkey, not on a war horse or in a chariot, but on a lowly donkey. At that time, Jewish nationalism had begun to rise, and there was the expectation of a political Messiah who would deliver them from the Roman domination and reign over them as King. There were others, however, who responded to the messianic signs of Jesus, especially the raising of Lazarus, and expected more. By riding on a donkey, Jesus shows He has not come to re-establish David's earthly kingdom.

As He enters Jerusalem the crowds hail Him as King with the words from Psalm 118:25 & 26, "*O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and He has made His light shine upon us. With bough in hand join the festal procession.*" The Jewish people knew this psalm well as it was associated with messianic expectations and was used during the Feast of Tabernacles and was recited daily accompanied by the waving of branches. We use similar words when we say, "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of Your glory; Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*" The word hosanna means 'Save (we) pray,' This event in the life of Jesus has its origin in God's promise in Zechariah 9:9 "*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*"

So then, the Season of Advent heralds the time when we as God's children look for, hope for, and prepare for the triumphant and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming again. He Himself said so, but it has been over 2000 years since He said so. There are reasons for His delay, and Peter gives them in 2 Peter 3 verses 3 & 4; 8-10; "*Know this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (8-10) But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*"

The Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ is clear: The Lord Jesus Christ truly will return. His Second Advent is not a myth, nor an empty promise. Every time we celebrate Holy

Communion we are reminded of Christ's saving commandment to 'eat His flesh and drink His blood', and of all that He has done for us – the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into heaven, and the Second and glorious Coming.

As devout Christians we also believe that the New Testament revelation of the Second Coming of Christ is meant to stimulate our preparation for it. The Nicene Creed, the most universal confession of faith in all of Christendom, speaks of Christ's return: *'He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.'* The emphasis is that Jesus will come again. Not when He will come again. St. Paul writes in Titus 2:12-14, *'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present life, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.'*

There are signs of Christ's coming, of that we can be sure. Jesus Himself prophesied many events that would take place in the world before His return, (Matthew 24; Luke 21:7-36), So they asked Him saying, *"Teacher, when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to happen?" And He said, "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'the time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars, and commotions, do not be afraid; for these things must happen first, but the end will not come immediately."* The Lord's warnings about the future are intended to make us live righteously in the present. Jesus and His apostles issue severe warnings, directly and indirectly, against second-guessing the time of His coming, and there is a whole string of references in the Scriptures to reinforce these warnings.

Very many denominations throughout the world have succumbed to divisive speculation about Christ's return and many Christians part ways, and new denominations are formed, around interpretations of events that have not yet happened. But we steadfastly believe in the reality of the Second Coming of Christ, but do not know when it will be. Jesus speaks the words, *"I am coming quickly"* three times in the last chapter of Revelation. Chapter 22:7 reads, *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."* Chapter 22:12 says, *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his works."* And again, in verse 29, He who testifies to these things says, *"Surely I am coming quickly!"* Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Of one thing we can be sure, His coming will happen on a day, at an hour when it is not expected. To confess the return of Christ is to stand four-square on His promise. To add 'when' to that promise is expressly warned about in the Scriptures. As members of His Church here on earth, let us attend instead to making sure that we are ready.

Let us pray.

*Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last days, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen*