

2 December 2018  
Advent 1

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Just As He Had Told Them”

Text: Luke 19:28-40; Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

It happened, we are told, *just as he had told them*. The colt; the young donkey. They found it, *just as He said*. The owner asked them what they were doing, *just as He said*. And they were able to bring it, *just as He said*. It is such a seemingly trivial part of this story; such a trivial display of divine omniscience. Luke, why waste valuable parchment space on that? Surely, there are other things, more important things, you could tell us than that. But it is this he tells us. It must have meant something to them. That Jesus knows. Even this.

Jesus knows a great deal more than that, or course. He knows also what will happen to Him when He enters Jerusalem. He knows His close friend will betray Him; sell Him out for 30 silver coins. He knows of His arrest and the hypocritical kiss. He knows the mocking and spitting that await Him. He knows of the wooden cross and iron nails with His name of them. He knows. That’s why He came, at Christmas, *David’s righteous Branch*; and that’s why He’s going, to Jerusalem. To *execute justice and righteousness in the land*, as Jeremiah said. To execute justice by being executed.

Jesus knows. But the disciples need to know that He knows. For the things they would see these next few days would cause them no small amount of doubt and fear. They should have known, right? Jesus had told them a number of times that He would be crucified. But how much should we know, too? And yet we still doubt and fear as well. When things in our lives don’t go as we think they should. When we don’t live up to our own expectations. We know God has promised to work good for us and can bring good from evil, yet still we question Him and His ways. Luke remembered the donkey. Maybe we should, too. For good to know that Jesus knows not just the really big things, but the little things, too.

So they get the donkey, *just as he had told them*. Were they stealing it? No. *The Lord has need of it*. It’s Lord has need of it. It belongs to the one who made it. God can’t steal. That can only be done by we who have rather foolish ideas about possessing things. We talk about what is “mine” without realizing how foolish that is; without realizing that I only have use of these things for a short time. But then I will die, and it will go to someone else. It’s all the Lord’s. If we have it, it is He who gave it. Your life, too. And

the Lord has need of you, too. That He bless others through you. That He ride into their lives on you.

***The Lord has need of it.*** And the owner lets it go. He accepts this explanation. Believes. Sometimes faith is found in the most unexpected places. What are you still holding on to? Holding back? Why?

So they bring the donkey to Jesus and set Him on it. And He heads for Jerusalem. This too, ***just as he had told us*** through the prophet Zechariah (Zech 9:9). And ***as he was drawing near . . . the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"***

I wonder who was in that crowd? Maybe Lazarus, who Jesus had just raised from the dead. Or Bartimaeus with his two new eyes? The 12 year old girl raised from death, or the woman who had been bleeding for those same 12 years, but now, no longer? Maybe the man who had been lying beside the pool of Bethesda for 38 years, hoping for healing? Or the couple married at Cana, where Jesus did His first mighty work? But this is a very different Jesus now, for to how many had He before said not to tell anyone what He had done? But now no objection. Now, Jesus *wants* everyone to know, and to see Him where He is going - on the cross. In fact, He says, if the crowd didn't announce His coming, the stones would! For this is the day not only the faithful had been waiting for, but creation, too. For not by His miracles would the world be redeemed, but by His blood and death.

This is where Jesus wants to be seen, and wants to be known. Where Jesus *needs* to be seen, and needs to be known. As the crucified one. The King on His throne made of wood.

Just as He was once laid in a manger of wood. There was a multitude rejoicing and crying out that day, too. Then it was angels. And their words were similar: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth* (Luke 2:14). But now, ***peace in heaven***. Now, in Jesus, heaven and earth, God and man, are at peace again. His cross atoning for the sin that separated God and man. Now there is forgiveness. Now there is peace.

It is the peace that we need. *Peace on earth* is the greeting that goes out at Christmas, but ***peace in heaven*** is the good news of the cross. And the peace that is ours in Jesus. *Peace on earth* is elusive and fleeting. It doesn't take long to see that. One war, one argument, one disagreement, one dispute ends and another soon takes its place. But *peace in heaven* is the peace that will never end.

And it is the peace that is ours even now, even when our lives, our hearts, and our world are not at peace. For it is the peace that Jesus comes and gives. To you. When your heart condemns you and He says I forgive you. When the devil tries to plant doubts and fears

in your mind, that you are not worthy to be a child of God, and Jesus says: But I baptized you. You are mine. My child. Not by worth, but by grace. And when you hunger and thirst for what this world cannot give, and Jesus feeds you with what the world could never give: His own Body and Blood. The Body and Blood that lay in the wood of the manger and hung on the wood of the cross, that rode in to Jerusalem on a donkey and now rides to you in bread and wine. Havens of peace in a world with little peace.

So *chronologically*, this reading today of Jesus entering Jerusalem belongs to Palm Sunday and the end of the Lenten season. But *theologically*, it is fitting for today, this First Sunday of a new Church Year; this First Sunday of Advent. For Advent isn't just about getting ready to remember Jesus' coming at Christmas, but more to get us ready for Jesus' coming again at the end of time.

Christmas is part of that, for Jesus has a second coming because He had a first coming. He came in the flesh to be our brother and save those who are flesh.

Palm Sunday is part of that, for the reason for Jesus' first coming, for His birth, was to go to the cross to die for the sin of the world.

But it is this First Sunday of Advent brings that brings it all together, so that you can await His second coming with confidence and joy, when He comes not as a baby, but as a conqueror; not on a donkey, but on the clouds; not humbly, but in glory; and when He comes not to die, but to take we who die to life. His life. Eternal life.

And you can await that coming with confidence and joy, because the Lord who is coming again is, in fact, already coming to you here and now, with His forgiveness and peace. That you be ready. That when He comes again, it will not be as a stranger, but as the one you have known all along. Your Good Shepherd, whose voice you know. Who cared for you, fed you, protected you, and was with you, all along.

That's what Paul was talking about when he wrote to the Thessalonians, as we heard today. When he said: ***and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all . . . so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*** Jesus is doing that now by coming to you now with His forgiveness and love, that you abound in it. That your hearts be blameless in holiness - His holiness, given to you. That when He comes again ***with all his saints***, you welcome Him as the crowds did into Jerusalem that day: ***Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*** In fact, we will now do that very thing, we will sing those very words in just a moment, as Jesus comes to us here and now in His Body and Blood. And in His coming now, we'll proclaim His death and look forward to His coming again. It's all here, for He is here. For you.

And all this, ***just as he has told you.*** That you know. We don't know how Christmas will

turn out, or our lives will turn out, or even what the rest of this year holds for us. Be He knows. Even little things, like donkeys. So you and whatever is happening in your life, whatever struggles and doubts, whatever fears and trials, they're not too small for Him. Jesus knows. And He knows you need Him. And so He comes for you. As surely as He did in the past, and as surely as He will in the future, so He comes now, with His forgiveness, life, and peace. That they be yours, as He is yours, and you are His.

*Savior of the Nations, Come!* (LSB #332)

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.