

November 28, 2021 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

Your Savior King is Coming!

With humility

With righteousness

The weeks before Christmas are filled with preparations. We buy and wrap presents. We set up a tree and decorate it. We clean out the guest room for holiday visitors. We may even leave some milk and cookies out for a special visitor. During the weeks before Christmas, not only do we prepare our homes for visitors. We also prepare our hearts for THE special visitor. This morning, we see that your savior king is coming.

With humility

Jeremiah is sometimes called “The Weeping Prophet.” It would be easy to make the case that he had the most difficult job of all the prophets. Almost all of the Jews had turned away from the true God and were bowing down to idols of wood and stone. The Lord had sent many prophets to warn his people, but they would not repent. Still, God sent Jeremiah to call the people to repentance one final time. From king to commoner, they all rejected Jeremiah. They said, “We’ve got the temple where God lives. There’s no way we’ll be defeated.” Jeremiah kept warning them, and finally, it happened. The Babylonians broke down the city walls killing thousands. The king was captured, his sons were killed, and King David’s dynasty died. The survivors were chained as prisoners and forced to walk hundreds of miles as slaves in Babylon. The temple was burned down. The city was left in ruins and the Jewish nation ceased to exist. The Lord promised that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. Now that the country was destroyed, it seemed as if there would be no Savior. There would be no heaven. The people finally realized that they were wrong. They blew it. The Jews thought that their only hope for peace and prosperity was for a powerful political and military ruler to reestablish Judah as a world power.

Maybe there have been times when you felt like those Jews. Maybe a loved one died. Maybe you lost your job and your house. Maybe other people turned against you and were cruel. Maybe you committed some sin that you are still ashamed to think of. Maybe you made some poor decisions that hurt you and others. Maybe all your plans fell apart. Maybe your health failed. Maybe you felt all alone and that no one cared about you. Maybe you felt as if it could not get worse. Maybe it felt as if

there was no tomorrow, no hope, no heaven. Maybe you felt as if your only solution was if some doctor had a magic cure and you happened to find a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

Once Jerusalem was destroyed and the people realized they blew, the Lord told Jeremiah to speak words of comfort to them. Maybe you know the promise in Jeremiah 29, “**I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future.**” A few chapters later, Jeremiah continued with the good news that a king would come. That brings us to our Old Testament lesson,

¹⁴ “**‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.**

¹⁵ “**‘In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;**

he will do what is just and right in the land.

¹⁶ **In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.**

God promised that from the stump of David’s family tree would come another king. Unlike the other kings from David’s tree, “he would do what is just and right.” He would be perfect. Then Judah and Jerusalem would live in safety. But the Lord was not talking about reestablishing the Jews as a world power. He was looking forward to a holy city whose glory would not be found in its walls or temple. He was talking about the Kingdom of Believers, the Holy Christian Church. He was talking about heaven where everything would be perfect forever.

The Jews expected a powerful political and military ruler on this earth, but that’s not what happened. Yes, the nation of Judah was reestablished 70 years after Jerusalem was destroyed, but it was never larger than a postage stamp on the world map. And when the divine descendant of David was born, he was born in a smelly barn to a poor couple from Nazareth with a bad reputation. Instead of an impressive army, he had 12 timid disciples. Instead of a gold crown, he wore a crown of thorns. Instead of powerful, proud stallion, he rode on a donkey. Instead of being respected, he was rejected. Instead of being hailed as a king, he was nailed as a criminal. Jesus was most certainly the Savior King God promised, but he came with humility. His goal was not to win battles but to win believers. Without a doubt many of the Jews were disappointed with Jesus.

It can be easy for us to be disappointed with Jesus, too. We pray and pray and pray and don't see the results we would like. We do our best, but our best never seems to be good enough. Coming to church does not seem to solve our problems. Being a believer does not make our lives easier. In fact, standing up for Jesus often gets us criticized. Being a Christian does not even give us a tax break. Our guilt continues to nag. It seems as if our country and culture is going down a moral sewer. We would like Jesus to intervene in some impressive way. We would like him to get good and honest politicians elected so that all the laws of the land would comply with the 10 Commandments. We try to live as God's holy people, but our minds go in selfish directions and our priorities get mixed up. We need to remember that Jesus did not come to give us a heaven on earth. He came to give us a heaven after earth. Jesus does come to us, but he still comes with humility.

He comes to us through his Word spoken and read. He comes hidden under the water of baptism. He comes hidden under simple bread and wine. Sparks do not fly every time we open our Bible. We do not hear the angels sing as we sing the truths of salvation. But when you sing, the angels are singing along. When your Bibles are opened, your conscience is absolved and your faith is strengthened. When we partake of the Sacrament, we receive Christ's own body and blood as the guarantee that your sins were paid for as you taste the appetizer of the heavenly wedding banquet. When there is a baptism, another soul is snatched from the devil's grasp. When you worship, you get a hint of the joy and unending happiness waiting for you in heaven. Yes, Jesus comes to us, but he comes with humility. He also comes with righteousness.

With righteousness

When the Lord had Jeremiah speak of the coming Savior, he explained (:16), "**This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.**" "It" refers to the city of Jerusalem. A city of stone and streets can not be holy, or righteous. But the people in the city can be holy, or righteous. Righteousness means being right with God, on his team, holy. Throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, believers are referred to as Jerusalem, or Mt. Zion, on which Jerusalem was built. The Apostle Paul explained (Ro 1:17), "**the righteous will live by faith.**" Through faith, simple trust in your heart, people are made righteous,. What I'm trying to explain is that this phrase is an Old Testament way of saying that you – the believers – are as righteous and pure and holy as Jesus himself.

Think of a little boy who is with his mother at the farmer's market during the summer. While she is choosing her fresh vegetables, he wanders over to the hot dog stand. He is hungry and seeing hot dogs makes him even more hungry. The hot dogs cost a dollar. He reaches into his pocket and can only find 15 cents. The hot dog vendor sees his big eyes and really wants to give him a hot dog for free. But the owner of the hot dog stand gave him strict orders not to give away any hot dogs. How can he obey his boss and yet show kindness to this hungry boy. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a dollar bill. He hands it to the boy and says, "Now you have enough to buy a hot dog." That is what God does with you. He is looking for righteousness in our lives. He wants us to be pure, holy, indeed perfect. If we hope to live in heaven with our holy and perfect God, then we need to be holy and perfect like him. But we can not even come close. So Jesus gives us what he is looking for in us. He gives us his righteousness. He credits us with his perfect life. Jesus gives you what you need to live in heaven where everything will be perfect forever.

And so, this Advent season, in spite of our sinfulness and in the midst of a mixed up world, we rejoice to hear that our Savior King is Coming. Amen.