

Behold Your King!

Text: Luke 17:20-25

Suggested Hymns:

10, 1, 733, 11, 18

1) A Man Of Sorrows And Acquainted With Grief

2) On A Holy Quest

3) The King Of Glory, The Judge

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 17:20–25, *²⁰ Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”*

²² Then He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. ²³ And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them. ²⁴ For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. ²⁵ But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is Advent in the Church. Again in the very first message of a new Church-Year the Church places before the gaze of uncertain times, the Christ of God with His atoning love, His saving grace, and His sure hope.

For broken lives, dashed hopes, shattered dreams, the Church offers the Christ of Golgotha. The Church knows no other answer for the world’s needs than Jesus.

It is Advent, a time of earnest searching and sincere self-examination. When the Church places before us the august figure of the Christ of Galilee, there is one inevitable question which must haunt our souls and burden our minds.

This question demands an answer, not tomorrow, not next year, but today. Is Jesus your Saviour and King? Answer this question while the voice of the Holy Spirit cries: *Behold Your King!* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Behold Your King, A Man Of Sorrows And Acquainted With Grief

When the Pharisees asked Jesus the question regarding the coming of the kingdom of God, they were speaking to the King of the Kingdom. And the first obligation which rested upon the heart of the Lord was His suffering and death. We read at the close of our text, ²⁵ *But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

The cross came into view. In a panoramic view Jesus saw the scenes of bitter anguish and agony in the dark recesses of Gethsemane, the mock trial and abuse in the high court of the Jews, the scourging and suffering before Pontius Pilate, the six hours of torture upon the tree of the cross.

He knew what was in the heart of man.¹ He saw the hypocrisy and scheming hatred which filled the souls of these questioning Pharisees and their darkened countenance. He realised that these self-righteous bigots would forge upon the anvil of their hate-filled hearts, instruments of murder against the Prophet of God.

Jesus knew that popularity with the fickle populace was short at best. Above their Palm Sunday hosannas He heard the rumble of Good Friday's "*Crucify Him; crucify Him!*" His path was leading to the tragedy of rejection and the sorrows of a criminal's death. Isaiah's picture of the Messiah was to become a grim reality: "*a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.*"

In the prophetic vision of the cross note the word "*must.*" It means more than the necessity of human circumstance. He must be a Man of Sorrows not only because He was holy and the Pharisees and their associates were sinful; not only because His popularity filled the religious leaders with burning jealousy, which caused them to lay plans of bitter persecution; and not only because an unjust and cruel Roman judge feared an official investigation of his regime.

These indeed were human circumstances, the causes which eyes of flesh see as a completely satisfactory explanation of the suffering and death and rejection of the Son of Man.

But underneath all these outward and human causes is the divine "*must*" of mercy and grace. These Pharisees were but unwilling tools in the hand of God for the accomplishment of the divine eternal plan of redemption.² Men meant

evil, but God turned it into good to save many people, to redeem sinful mankind.³ It was not the compulsion of Jews and Gentiles that drove Jesus along the Way of Sorrows to Calvary's blood-stained hill.

The compulsion of love for sin-burdened men, nailed Jesus to the cross and held Him there in the midst of His anguish, agony, and woe. He must become the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief because He wished to be obedient to His Father unto death, even the death of the cross.⁴ He must suffer because He desired to give His life a ransom for many.⁵

He must endure the rejection of His people and the curse and shame of the cross because sin must be atoned for, the wrath of God appeased, the curse of the Law borne, peace and reconciliation with God earned and secured, Satan defeated, death conquered, and the grave made a scorn and a mockery.

There we have the real reasons why the holy countenance of the incarnate Son of God is to be marred with anguish, and red with blood, and white with the pallor of death. The "**must**" proves that the King of the Kingdom died not a martyr's death, but the death of the loving, sin-atoning, death-conquering Shepherd-King and High Priest.

This is the meaning which the Christian Church, loyal to the Bible, attaches to the call of Advent: Behold your King, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

This, and this alone, is the basis and foundation of all that historic Christianity has to offer for the comfort of hearts, troubled by the convulsing consciousness of sin, for the quieting of souls made restless by fear and worry, for the healing of hearts broken by life's sorrows and disappointments, for the strengthening of lives in the battle against sin and temptation, and for the hope of people who walk afraid toward the setting of the sun.

The cross of Calvary, on which the Prince of Glory died⁶ as man's Substitute, offering Himself as a holy and blameless Sacrifice in atonement for sin, is the fountain from which flow the refreshing waters of grace and divine pardon. It is the safe refuge to which shattered and aching hearts can flee and find a reconciled Father and hear words of sympathetic understanding, and find grace to help in times of need.

This cross contains the moral dynamic which can fill the selfish and greedy and dissatisfied heart of carnal man with the power of love to God and love to men. This cross can open men's lips to sing this song of victory in the valley of the shadow of death: "*O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?*" ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁷

What if people mock and ridicule and criticise the sin-atonement power of the cross? We will gladly go with Jesus outside the gate and bear the reproach; but we will continue, with the help of God, to preach with Paul, with John the Baptist, with Isaiah and all the prophets and apostles, *Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,* ²⁴ *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*⁸

And thus today, on the very first Sunday of the New Church Year, we call out to every sinner: *Behold your King, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief — Jesus, your Saviour!*

It is through this message that Jesus builds His kingdom. With this message upon His lips the King of Israel goes out on His holy quest to win rich trophies of grace, to found and expand His glorious kingdom.

2. Behold Your King On A Holy Quest

The Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God would come. They referred to the kingdom which according to prophecy God would establish through the Messiah, the Son of David.

But these religious leaders of Israel had a worldly conception of the Messiah's kingdom. They hoped He would free them from the hated Roman yoke and bring Israel worldly power and dominion, honour and glory.

Jesus flatly rejects these materialistic ideals. His kingdom is not of this world.⁹ It does not come with pomp and outward show, so that it can be observed with the eye. The kingdom of God is built within human hearts. The building of this spiritual, invisible kingdom is the noble plan and high ambition of the King.

Behold, the King of Israel is not on a worldly conquest. He maintains no army. His ships do not patrol the high seas. The sword is not drawn to subject people to His rule, nor in defence of His kingdom.

He does not desire that His servants urge the enactment of “Christian” laws. His kingdom is not built by political propaganda, by the enactment and enforcement of Sunday-observance laws, better divorce laws, and laws for a better living wage or shorter working hours.

The establishment of a “Christian” social order by means of political activities and laws is not the Church’s task. And experience proves that the policeman’s club cannot reform, much less regenerate, the depraved, selfish, greedy human heart. Law can restrain, but not change, the human heart. Our King is not on a crusade to establish by law and force of arms a “Christian” social order.

Behold, Jesus who once was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, but is now exalted at the right hand of the Father’s majesty and power is on a holy quest of love. By the winsome voice of the Gospel He desires to win human hearts to allegiance to Himself.

Upon His hands are the nail-prints; upon His side can be seen the scar of the spear. Above the cries of human anguish and woe His voice of tender invitation is heard: “²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”¹⁰

He calls the crushed and impoverished people to come to Him and taste the sweetness of His peace in the assurance of sins forgiven, to enjoy reconciliation with God by the blood of Calvary, and to be made glad by the riches of His grace and love.

He asks the tax-collectors and sinners grovelling in the dust, miserable outcasts in rags and tatters, weeping over their sins, to come to Him just as they are,¹¹ and pour their repentant cries into the bosom of His love and hear the answer of love: “*Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*”¹²

He asks those bowed down with the burden of woe to come to Him, and He will give them rest for their souls in the assurance of His never-failing presence and merciful guidance and certain help.

He asks those who feel their inadequacy to come to Him and have Him make them more than conquerors. And those who come to Him as their Shepherd-King are added to the household of God, made citizens in His Kingdom of Grace and heirs of the Kingdom of Glory.

They give to their King the homage of their hearts, the love of their souls, surrender to Him their lives, blend their interests with His, and always seek and in all places to magnify Him, their Friend and Saviour.

As citizens of His kingdom they have their real and abiding citizenship in heaven; but as citizens of the State they are deeply interested in righting the wrong and making this world a better place in which to live. As citizens in the Kingdom of Grace they are earnestly and zealously active in joining their King on His holy quest of winning souls for Christ.

See your King on His holy quest! Has He won your heart? Are you His subject? Have you become by faith a citizen in His kingdom? Have you permitted Him to reign over you? Have you given Him your soul's love and your life's devotion?

Oh, let the hosannas of our lips come from a heart that truly accepts Jesus as Master, Lord, and King. Today again His voice is heard. Today again He seeks entrance into your soul. Accept Him today; tomorrow it may be too late.

3. Behold Your King Of Glory, The Judge

Remember, Jesus who in these years of grace is on the holy quest of love will one day return visibly as the Judge of the living and the dead. Once He came to suffer for our sins. Now He comes in His Gospel to woo our hearts. And only those who trust and love and serve Him here will on the Last Day find entrance in His Kingdom of Glory.

To His disciples, the members of His Kingdom of Grace, Jesus speaks about the kingdom which is to come. Instead of days of worldly glory they were to make ready for days of anguish and persecution.

The Master's way led through the thorns of suffering to the cross. And the cross was to be the mark of discipleship. In these sorrowful days the disciples would wish for only one day of future glory but not see it.

False prophets would arise and say: *‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’* But we are not to follow them. Suddenly, unexpectedly, like lightning, the Son of Man will appear visibly upon the face of the earth, and all the eyes of men will see Him, the Judge of the world. Then, and not until then, will the sorrows of His children cease, and the home-coming be complete.

This, too, is the message of Advent: *Behold your King, the Judge!* While we wander here below, suffering must be our lot. The name of Jesus will be spoken against. The millennium is a dream and a delusion.

But a day of the Son of Man will come. As quickly as lightning He will appear, and all His holy angels with Him, to lead His children to the kingdom of endless glory and perfect happiness, to break His enemies with a rod of iron, and to dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.

So let us conclude with these fitting words for Advent written in Psalm 2:12, ***Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 2:25

² Acts 2:23

³ John 11:50-52

⁴ Philippians 2:8

⁵ Matt. 20:28

⁶ Hymn 54

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

⁹ John 18:36

¹⁰ Matthew 11:28-29

¹¹ Hymn 335

¹² Matthew 9:2