

Sermon for the 1st Sunday in Advent

Sermon Text: Zechariah 9:9

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

There are no longer many kings, emperors, dukes, or ruling princes in today's world. We have elected governments, presidents, and a chancellor at the top surrounded by a government team. Many countries on earth are unfortunately also ruled by dictators. People, who somehow, often violently, have come to power and ruthlessly abuse that power.

Yet whether kings, princes, presidents, dictators or whatever the people at the top are called, we little people can hardly approach them and tell them personally what moves us. Nor do they come to us, where normal commoner life with its worries and complaints takes place. Even if they wanted to, they couldn't go everywhere and make time to listen to the people. When they do happen to travel through the country to visit this or inspect that, then they somehow pass over the little things.

It has always been like this and will continue to stay like this in this world: There is always an upper and lower system. Regardless of which form of government. There is distance between the top and the bottom. If only those in power would always seek the best for the community they are entrusted with, for the many! Thank God there are those who provide for their country and people, who want to serve first and foremost! Unfortunately, there are also too many others who are mainly out to seek their own advantage.

Is there then somewhere a powerful person who hasn't built a barrier between himself and us, who doesn't need it, whose joy it is to grant us free access to his heart, to his willingness to act and help? Is there one who doesn't seek for what is his but is concerned about the well-fare and salvation of us all? Is there a high and noble person who likes to come to us in the depths and will be our liberator who creates justice and a future for us?

The prophet says: Yes! He comes! You, people of God, you do not choose him. You don't bring him out of your own ranks. You don't discover him, you don't raise him until he's grown, you can't shape him according to your thoughts and purposes, according to your supposed needs. He is given and sent to you by God. See, your king is coming to you!

The prophets hoped and waited and proclaimed that the righteous shoot should come out of David's house and line. They didn't hope in vain, did not wait for nothing, didn't preach into the wind.

Jesus Christ has come, truly a King, a Righteous One, and a Helper. A King, not because Joseph, who was a distant descendant of David, married Mary and legally made Mary's son Jesus his son. To be sure, it wasn't unimportant, but what was and remains even more important is this: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity. Of eternal origin, the same God in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Mystery of the One God, who is the Three in One,

Unity in the Trinity. This is the source of the royal dignity and of the royal office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Also, as the incarnate, Jesus knows about His unique fellowship with the Father. He knows about His kingship, the origins of which are more than worldly: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matt. 11:27) "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

What kingly words. What statements of sovereignty amidst lowliness. What awareness of God and self in the confined earthly personal accounts of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus knows who He is. With all humility before the Father – He doesn't hold back from people. He says to the Jewish High Council who gathered early on Good Friday and to the pompous high priest Caiaphas: "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power (that is of God), and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:62) I am the eternal Son, I am the Son of Man – Judge of the world, an incomparable King and Lord.

At the same time, Jesus was such a King, He still is, and will be at the great day of His revelation in power and glory: a King who humbles Himself with love for us poor people. A King, who wants to help His people out of every fear and need, from injustice, fear of death, and hopelessness.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost," (Luke 19:10) Jesus said while He was on earth.

He will also come in this way at the end of days and will end the entire temporary world and human drama. And He will unite the people of God in the perfect kingdom of God, with God and under God. He, our King, will do it. We cannot do this, bring it about, or preemptively contrive it (in other words fake it)! We can only pray as our Savior and King taught us: "Thy kingdom come!" And believe in His faithfulness.

See, your King comes to you.

He comes to us also now in the waiting time before the day of Judgement. He comes to us in these uncertain times.

He doesn't leave us alone, doesn't let us sit here and collapse from insufficient strength. He comes and speaks to us in the Word of the Holy Gospel. He comes and unites people through Holy Baptism as members of His holy body, the Church, and as partakers of His work of salvation.

He comes and works in holy Absolution, in acquittal: your sins are forgiven. He comes and blesses us in Holy Communion with the bread and the wine. In it we actually receive with our mouths the body and blood of the Savior. We are cleansed in body and soul and sanctified to eternal life.

It may be that we sometimes doubt if it is really Him. Isn't His coming in Word and Sacrament too lowly according to outward form? We want something decidedly royal, stunningly lordly, hard-hitting, and compelling. Ever so slowly that comes soon enough at the end of the grace period. Let us remember the prophet's words and how Jesus fulfilled them: "humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This is how the prophet Zechariah describes the Messiah's entry into the royal city. This is exactly how Jesus did it on Palm Sunday. He found a donkey's foal and rode on it. A

strange kingly mount, an unimposing kingly entrance. But it had to be like this. Because the cross waited for Jesus as His royal throne. The Messiah should come to His glory through suffering according to God's will. And to take the dishonorable into His glory.

We are happy that our King and Savior still always comes to us in a humble form: once with manger, donkey, cross – now the Word of the Gospel, the water of baptism, the bit of bread and wine at Holy Communion. He hasn't yet come as the Son of Man who will judge the world, before whom all people of the earth will with trembling fall to their knees. Right now is still the time of grace. The eternal King still invites us to rejoice that He comes down to us and is so gently and lovingly close to us.

See, you King is coming to you.

Through the clothes in which He still dresses Himself, He still shines and smiles on us as He who is: a Righteous One and a Helper. He offers Himself to us as the righteousness with which we can stand before God. No other stands in the court. He offers Himself to us as the help during all the hardships we should ever encounter. Above all, help and salvation for eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ is the only Righteous One who, instead of looking for righteousness in us and being angry when He finds none, gives us His eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness! "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6), Jesus says in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. He calls those blessed who confess their shortcomings and their desire. And He doesn't refer them to an unknown address that is possibly untraceable. With Him, who blesses the hungry and thirsty, we have already found the right address, have already arrived at God's fountain of life. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ and clings to Him with heart and life, is righteous in God's eyes, and through the blood of Christ and His righteousness, is acceptable before the Father in heaven now and into eternity.

A helper!, the prophet finally says of the Messiah.

That Jesus Christ is the helper is already within the name of Jesus. This is the name that Joseph and Mary, at God's command, called the child: Jesus. Jesus, God's help, the helper coming from God. The hand of God, which turns much suffering, while other suffering that stays with us is made bearable by this Hand, makes it fruitful to unexpected blessings and ultimately transforms all suffering into blessings, life, and joy.

We entrust ourselves to this kingly, merciful, and faithful help in the new church year which lies so uncertainly before us. Jesus Christ alone should be Lord and Savior in your life and mine. He alone should be at the center of our church life and rule it. And we want to receive His gifts and strength, so we can go our way with faith in Him, in the fear of God, and in obedience until He comes and takes us home to the eternal house of the Father. Praise Jesus Christ. Forever and ever, Amen.