

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, as a new Church year begins we pray that You would guide us through Your Word and Sacraments, show us Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, and continue to forgive us all of our sins. All of this and more we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the twenty-first chapter, beginning at the first verse and we read in Jesus' name:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and

bring them to Me. ³ "And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." ⁴ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" ⁶ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. ⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord,

that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

While I do not worship him and I do not believe in him and generally I think that about everything he says is a lie... I've always wondered what it would be like to be in a town when the Pope arrives. I can just imagine the fanfare that would surround such an event. Shutting down the airports until he cleared through them. Closing roads so as to not mess with his plans. Making sure that everything was perfect for this man to come and visit. The pomp, the circumstance, the shouts, the joy, the adulation, the love... everything poured out for this man, this mere man, as he came into a town of the world.

And, yet, two-thousand years ago, one tremendously greater than the Pope came

into Jerusalem... but the people only cared so much. There was fanfare, but there could have been more. There were those who were following Jesus, but there were those who were mocking Him. The roads were not closed down. The streets were not blocked for His arrival. There was not a special vehicle waiting to take Him around the town. Instead, Jesus came into town on a donkey, on a lowly, stinking, little, donkey. But the most important arrival in all the world took place on that day, for Christ had come to Jerusalem to ultimately lay down His life for His the entire world. Yes, friends, in this season of Advent, we celebrate one simple fact, ***Your King Comes to You.***

Ultimately, Jesus will come three times for you... of course you may only be alive for one of them. The first time Jesus came, He came as the Son of Mary and the Son of God. Jesus was born for each and every one of us. He came into this world in the same

way that each of us did. The second time He comes, is through His Word, which He does to this very day. Christ comes to you in His Word and in His Sacraments. For when we read about Christ, when we receive His life-giving body and blood in communion, Christ has come to us to give us the forgiveness of our sins. And the third time Christ comes will be at the end of the world. Three times Christ will come and we really only get to see one of them.

Of course, those who lived around the coming of Jesus in the flesh show us one important fact: we would have ignored Him just like they did. Jesus, the Son of God, came in the flesh and there was no pomp in His birth, no royal announcements went out to the masses, no celebrations arose; rather, some shepherds and some wandering nomads paid Him a visit and then went home.

As He walked about this earth He, too, was abandoned by those who were closest to Him. Once they heard a teaching or two that rubbed them the wrong way, they split and who knows if they ever came back. His own family thought He was crazy and, basically, disowned Him for a time. All of His disciples ran away from Him afraid to be near Him for fear of arrest. And as Jesus came into Jerusalem, there were some who were happy to see Him and shout about it; but many more stayed home.

We like to think that if we were alive we would've been with those who were thronging to Jesus... but would we have? In this life, while we have not seen Him face to face, we often question Jesus' love and devotion to us. If we get hurt and end up on the hospital, we often wonder if Jesus even cares. If we lose our jobs, we wonder how can God treat us so poorly. If we lose a loved one, we questions God's judgment and His

decisions. So, would we really have clung to Jesus as tightly as we like to think? As Koren says, ***“Even if there are many who put on a good face and call Him Lord, Lord - there are relatively few who believe in Him and by faith enter His kingdom and receive Him as their King.”***

And this is true. Like the Jews, we often think of God and Jesus as this larger than life person who commanded waves and winds; who caused fire to rain down from heaven and who could cure diseases with a word. However, we often forget that Jesus was, really, a nobody. He came from a small town in the backwoods. He was born out of wedlock. He had relatively poor parents. His cousin was a real weirdo. And, on this day, He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey... there was nothing royal about this man. There was nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him; yet, there He was... there was

the king of all the world and He was coming into Jerusalem for you.

You see, Jesus was born so that He might live the perfect life in your place. Jesus endured pain, torment, scorn, ridicule, unbelief, and mocking throughout His entire life. Jesus was abandoned by family and friends. Jesus was hung on a cross. And all of this was done with you in mind. Jesus was born, suffered, and died for you... so that you would never have to endure the pains of hell like He did.

For as He hung on that cross, He endured the pain of hell itself. He bore all of your punishment and all of your guilt on that cross, guaranteeing that you would never have to face that wrath of God that He so willingly endured. And after that punishment was over, after He suffered everything for every sin of every person; Jesus died. He died and He was placed in a tomb.

However, three days later Jesus rose from the dead. He rose to announce that hell could not hold Him down. He rose to declare to His faithful that they now have heaven waiting for them. He rose to show His children that they too will rise. And now through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, we know that heaven is ours. Through faith in His life, death, and resurrection, we know that eternity with Him is ours and we will experience it one day.

And we know this is true, because His word tells us so. We know this is true because God wrote it in His book to us, His promise to us, that through faith we have heaven waiting. We know this is true because God, through His Word and Sacraments, has placed faith in our hearts and He continues to strengthen that faith every minute of every hour of every day. For as Koren says, ***“He is just as alive, present, and powerful among us as***

He was at that time among them. His Word is the same and His works are still repeated, even if in another form.”

And just as Christ once entered into our world and into Jerusalem, still to this day He wants to enter into your heart. He enters into your heart through His word and through His sacraments. And once He has taken up residence in your heart, then we wait for Him to come again on that final day. But until that final day arrives, we love Christ with all of our heart and with all of our mind and with all of our strength... and we perform those works that He has prepared for us in advance to do. We do not do them to earn heaven; no, we do them because we already have heaven and we desire, as obedient children of God, to show forth just a fraction of the love that He lavishes upon us every day.

Dear friends in Christ, as we begin a new Church Year let us not be like the Pharisees and the Jews of Jesus' day deriding and mocking Him; rather, let us be ready for Him to come. To come to us as a child, to come to us in His word and sacraments, and to come to us at the end of days once more.

Thanks be to God for sending His Son to me so many times. Thanks be to God for loving me and choosing me as His very own to inherit eternal life. And thanks be to God for always reminding me that *My King Comes to Me* through so many means.

Dear friends, thanks be to God. Amen.