

November 30, 2008 – The First Sunday of Advent

Lessons: Isaiah 64: 1-9, 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9, Mark 11:1-10

When they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this? Say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately'. And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?'. And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!'

Introduction

Last Sunday, the Last Sunday of the Church Year; the Sunday of the Fulfillment; the King of kings Sunday, in our second Sunday service, we we're greeting one another with the phrases we use at the grave side committal service in the cemetery, as well as on Easter Sunday: 'CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!' Our responses were based on our epistle lesson, **1 Cor. 15 'In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep'**. And now this weekend, the first weekend of Advent, we're singing our 'Hosanna! Loud Hosanna's.' Everything seems to be topsy-turvy. Everything seems upside-down, inside-out, turned around... changed. I thought it was Advent and Christmas, not Lent and Easter?!

But, you see, the two can't be separated. Without Lent and Easter, there can be no Advent and Christmas, and without Advent and Christmas, there can be no Lent and Easter. They make a complete cycle -- a complete circle of our salvation. The seasons of Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas turn everything topsy-turvy, upside-down, inside-out, and that's what God wants to have happen. It's called repentance, conversion, change. And God's desire includes you and me. God's wants to change us, from lost and condemned sinners in His sight, under His Law, to forgiven and redeemed saints in His sight, in the good news of His Gospel. Are you ready for such a change, not only during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, but a change in your life, in your heart and soul, in your attitude about how you see things? And that is what I want to talk a little bit about to you this first weekend of Advent. **THE UNCHANGEABLE ONE MAKING HIS CHANGE IN US!** Thank you for giving these few moments of your time and pray for me. That I will clearly proclaim God's Word.

I.

Lent and Advent, are seasons of preparation on the Church calendar before the two huge holidays of Easter and Christmas which even the secular world wants to cash in on. Christmas and Easter are the cash cows of the secular world especially in these questionable economic times, be patriotic and spend, spend, spend. But the seasons of Lent and Advent are still reserved as special seasons for us as Christians. The world hasn't cashed in on them so much, yet. Advent, however, can be an especially inconvenient time for many people. Tucked in between Thanksgiving and Christmas, it's such a busy, busy time of year, isn't it? The pace of daily life is already so hectic at this time of year, Advent just accelerates us even more as we rush, rush, rush from one activity to another. There are projects to do, appointments to keep, commitments to honor, parties to plan and parties to attend. There are gifts to buy, cards to send, goodies to bake, concerts and plays to go to... busy, busy, hectic, hectic. Every year, you'd have thought we would have learned a lesson from one Advent to another. But, we human beings are slow learners, aren't we? God gives us Christians the Advent season as a kind of liturgical speed bump to slow us down. God gives us Christians Advent to have us think about and consider the one thing needful in our hectic lives, which is the eternal salvation of our and our loved ones souls after all the hub-bub of the secular world has ended.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, the streets of Jerusalem were over-loaded with holiday crowds. Also, just like Rochester's Apache Mall during Christmas, with it's shoppers and Santa Claus picture-takers, Jerusalem was a busy, busy, hectic place on that first Palm Sunday. Families were gathering at shopping markets that were stimulating the Roman economy to pay for the pork-barrel projects of the Ceasars of Rome, the great Jewish holiday, the Feast of the Passover, was fast approaching. The atmosphere was much like our lives during our holidays of Christmas and Easter. And then comes Advent. The word advent means *come*. Jesus *advents* into the hectic hustle and bustle of the Passover holiday hub-bub. He comes. He advents--simply riding on a donkey-- a borrowed donkey that He didn't even own! The King of the cosmos, the Creator of the Universe, God Himself, incarnate, riding a borrowed donkey into the hub-bub of people's distracted holiday lives. Jesus interrupts everything, doesn't He?! Jesus comes into the hectic Passover of Jerusalem, into the city of the temple of God, the place of sacrifice, to sacrifice Himself. Jesus comes to die. God comes to do the most humble, human thing there is to do, to die a human death in our place, as our substitute. Jesus comes as a King like no other king this world has ever seen. Jesus comes interrupting everyone's busy ness with His death on a cross and His resurrection from the dead. You know, that is *exactly* what Jesus wants to do in your hectic holiday and every day lives, too. Jesus comes

into the busy ness of our human sin and death, and He interrupts it all with His death and resurrection from the dead, for you and me, as our Savior over sin, over death, over hell itself. That interruption of grace changes everything for us Christians, doesn't it?

II.

This entire fall election season, which has actually gone on and on for nearly two years with the primaries and everything, we have heard the campaign slogan 'change'. And, with President-elect Obama, we're getting what we voted for – 'change'. Some change for the good and some for the bad, depending on whom you ask and when you ask them. Human change changes all the time, doesn't it? Human history changes in cycles all the time. The Roman Empire of the first century has changed into the American society of the twenty-first century. Human life also changes in cycles. We begin in infancy, progress through childhood, adolescence and adult-hood, and end up in old age. Well, Jesus' Advent -- Jesus' coming -- Jesus Himself, interrupts the empires and societies of the world and interrupts the cycles of our lives. Jesus also changes everything. But, unlike societal or personal life changes, Jesus' change is forever. Jesus' change is permanent. Jesus' change is not dependent upon us at all. Jesus' change is dependent on God's grace and mercy upon us in the changes of our lives. Our economic failure or prosperity, our military might or weakness, our social standing, our political leanings all make absolutely no difference in the eternal change Jesus wants to bring to everyone by the grace of God. Jesus' change -- Jesus' interruption into our lives changes us forever from being sinners caught up in the secular changes of this world to being saints, holy people in God's sight focused upon Jesus Christ Himself as our Savior. And that is the good news of God's Word that we all need to have interrupt and change the focus of our busy, busy, hectic, distracted lives. With the words of **Psalm 118 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'**, the crowds of holiday filled Jerusalem cried out 'Hosanna', which means 'save us now'. And that's exactly what Jesus does. He comes. Jesus *advents* to our hearts and lives to make a change. Political and economic, social or life cycle change is **not** the reason Jesus came. God will leave that up to our President-elect Obama, as God's Left Hand Kingdom, and to the natural passing of the seasons on the calendar. But, Jesus saves us by bringing into our lives eternal, unchangeable change. Jesus brings all the blessings of heaven to us, which is God's real presence among us, including God's forgiveness, God's grace and God's peace down to earth, into our lives as Immanuel - God with us. That's what Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter is all about. So that in the midst of social, political, cultural, economic, or even, personal change, life changes when Jesus comes. Jesus *advents*. Jesus changes how we see, cope and deal with all of life's temporary changes. Jesus interrupts our lives and the hectic ness of our busy holiday and changes our focus of faith to be upon Him as our UNCHANGEABLE CHANGER.

III.

In our Lutheran Catechism, we confess with the second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come. 'What does this mean? God's Kingdom comes by itself even without our prayer, BUT we pray that it may also come to us.'" You see Jesus' Kingdom is not a past event coming only to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, or coming only to Bethlehem on a long-ago Christmas. God's Kingdom of grace come, advents, interrupts and changes our lives right now. Every time we hear God's Word God's Kingdom comes Hosanna and saves us and we're changed from sinner to saint. Every time we affirm the absolution 'all our sins are all forgiven for Jesus' sake' God's Kingdom comes Hosanna and saves us and we're changed from sinner to saint. Every time we invoke our baptisms, our rebirth as members of the family of God, God's Kingdom comes Hosanna and saves us, we're changed from sinner to saint. Every time we receive Holy Communion with Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of all our sins, God's Kingdom comes Hosanna and saves us. We're changed from sinner to saint. The Unchangeable One comes, advents and changes us, topsy-turvy, inside-out, upside-down and completely around in the sight of God, from damned sinners to loved, valued and forgiven saints of God grace. That is true repentance, not a change we make, but an eternal change given to us all, for Jesus' sake!

Conclusion:

Lent and Faster, Advent and Christmas make a complete cycle of God's grace which encircles all of us in our hectic, busy, stressed out, distracted, sinful, holiday and everyday lives.

`See, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation'.

He comes to you no longer on a borrowed donkey. He comes to you no longer as a baby in a barn. He comes to you no longer as a crucified criminal on a cross. He comes to you in His Word and Sacrament to interrupt your lives and change everything about you with His grace, love and mercy. Simply receive Him! The Unchangeable One who changes you forever! Now that's an interruption we all need in our lives! Amen.