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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

First Sunday in Advent (One-Year Series)

December 3, 2017

Text: Matthew 21:1–9

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

“¹Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. ²As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore” (Psalm 125:1–2). Mount Zion is the name of the mountain in Jerusalem upon which the Jewish Temple was built. Mount Zion came to represent all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Figuratively, it represents the Church of the Old and New Testaments; the complete number of all true believers of all times and places; they are like Mount Zion, which abides forever, says the psalmist. The writer to the book of Hebrews describes the Church as Mount Zion in Hebrews 12:22–24:

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Every Lord's Day, we come to Mount Zion, the Church of living God to join all the hosts of heaven in joyous gathering around Holy Spirit-inspired gifts of living Word and holy Sacraments. We come as the redeemed of the Lord, the righteous made perfect by the blood of King Jesus, the blood that speaks a word of redemption on our behalf.

We come to Mount Zion, saints of God, because King Jesus went to Mount Zion in Jerusalem so many years ago to win for Himself a Holy Church. There, through blood, sweat, tears, death, and resurrection, He won for Himself a glorious Church; by means of blood, He has made His Church, His Mount Zion, glorious and beautiful, a bride made worthy by His love and faithfulness.

Today, the First Sunday in Advent, is the beginning of the New Year for us. We begin the New Year by remembering that Jesus, our precious Lord and Savior, went to

Mount Zion to win us unto Himself. And, we rejoice that He continues to come to His Mount Zion, His holy Church each and every Lord's Day to give His people His precious gifts. Jesus is the faithful One who will never abandon His precious people. This Lord's Day, like so many throughout the centuries, we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come to Your Mount Zion, that we may be rescued from all threatening perils, that by Your gracious visitation, our hearts and minds might be enlightened and made pure, and that all sins which weigh us down, would be forgiven and removed forever." Amen (compilation of Advent collects).

Today's gospel text is from Matthew 21:1–9, the record of the Lord Jesus coming to Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the city and dwelling place of God. Jesus is going to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover with His disciples in order to institute His Holy Supper as His last will and testaments. Then, He will die and rise again to establish forever His holy, Mount Zion, that can never be moved or shaken.

This decisive coming requires preparation. Through His prophet Zechariah, the Lord revealed His plans to come to Mount Zion some 500 years in advance. Around 520 B.C., the prophet Zechariah (9:9) declared, "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."

In order to fulfill those long-awaited plans, Jesus sends two disciples into Jerusalem in order to borrow a donkey and a colt. "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once" (vs. 2–3). Wonder of wonder, the King of this creation must borrow His beast of burden.

On Good Friday, just a few days later, our Lord's poverty becomes all the more apparent. He is rejected and despised by His own people in cruel mocking and torture. Before Pontus Pilate, Jesus wears a royal, purple robe as a symbol of derision and hatred. The Romans and the Jews gave Jesus a throne, a brutal cross that drained His life. Jesus was given a crown, a ring of piercing thorns circled His head. His royal scepter was nails driven into His hands. Near Mount Zion, Jesus dies in abject poverty, in shame, in total isolation as heaven and earth turn their back on their Lord. Jesus doesn't even have His own tomb; He's buried in a borrowed grave. Having to borrow a donkey is emblematic of who Jesus was during His earthly ministry. The

King of glory emptied Himself completely and became obedient unto death, that He might win for Himself an unshakeable, holy, and blessed Mount Zion, His Church. He emptied Himself of all His riches so that He can bestow them upon us, His Church.

That donkey, upon which Jesus rides, also signals that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords. The Jerusalem crowd certainly understood what Jesus meant when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. In vs. 9, Matthew records the crowd rejoicing and praising God with loud voices and palm branches spread upon the road. They are preparing a royal highway for King Jesus. With loud, expectant voices, the crowd declares, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (vs. 9). To this very day, we join with God’s people throughout the centuries proclaiming, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest” (Sanctus, LSB 195).

Those words, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” are borrowed from Psalm 118:26. They were spoken when Israel’s kings return to Mount Zion victorious in battle over her enemies. Do we not do well to sing those words each and every Lord’s Day as we celebrate our Lord’s victory over sin, death, evil, and every form of despair? This day and all days lived in the saving faith of the Lord Jesus are days of celebration and victory. For King Jesus continues to come to us, His Mount Zion that abides forever in His love, grace, and forgiveness.

We citizens of Mount Zion are to be Advent people, people always preparing for the coming of Jesus. In this service, Jesus comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word and Sacraments. King Jesus comes to us in the grace of the Holy Spirit by the humble means of the human voice, simple water, plain bread and common wine to bring us the peace and glory of heaven. Through these simple means, your sins are cast away from you as far as the east is from the west. In and through King Jesus, you stand before God the Father righteous and justified, the Mount Zion that abides forever.

You are the Lord’s Mount Zion. It’s so easy to forget this glorious truth, to be distracted, to even fall asleep in a sort of sin-induced comatose. Scripture admonishes us to awake from sleep for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The day is at hand so we are to cast off the works of darkness and clothe ourselves with the armor of light. In Christ’s Mount Zion, that is, in His holy Church, the darkness and dissipations of orgies, sexual immorality, drunkenness, every form of

sinful sensuality, quarreling and jealousy are to be abandoned; no provisions are made to satisfy the desires of our sinful flesh. Instead, we the citizen of Mount Zion are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus (paraphrase of Rom. 13:11–14, epistle text). It is His righteousness and His love that compels us to be prepared and ready for our Lord's coming. We are His Mount Zion; He is our Lord, now and forever.

¹Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, ²beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. ³Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress...¹¹Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments! ¹²Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, ¹³consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation ¹⁴that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever” (Psalm 48:1–3, 11–13).

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.