

November 28, 2021
First Sunday of Advent

“Life Outside the Walls”

Luke 19:28-40

Today begins the season of Advent, a season aimed at the appearing of Christ. I tend to think of Christ's advent in three ways: His appearing in our past, in our present and in our future.

The triumphal entry is obviously an event from the history of Jesus' first coming in our past. But truth be told, it has a lot of foreshadowing of Jesus Second Coming in our future when every man, woman and child ever to live will recognize Jesus as the divine Son of God in glory; believers rejoicing and those who rejected Him, well, not so much. But I've never really thought of this triumphal entry as a picture of Jesus in our present, at least until today.

Sunday school as a child can cement images and understandings of the Bible in your mind that aren't quite accurate. For me, the Triumphal Entry is one of those stories. Where do you picture the triumphal entry taking place? I recall pictures of Jesus on the donkey going through the streets of the city with the Pharisees scowling down from the balconies above. I know I've seen pictures like that in Sunday school and on the cover of church bulletins. But what is the truth?

If you read the Gospels carefully it's pretty obvious that the procession with the palm branches and coats on the road takes place outside the city wall as Jesus comes down from the Mount of Olives. Once Jesus reaches the city proper the parade breaks up. Of course it does! The city is packed for the Passover celebration and its streets are none too wide. Additionally, a huge procession within the city with folks proclaiming somebody as king would have aroused the interest of the Roman contingent stationed there. No, when Jesus reached the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem, I'm pretty sure He hopped off that donkey and the whole spectacle was over.

This actually fits pretty well with the reality of things. Although Jerusalem is seen as the heart and soul of Yahwistic worship by Jews all over the world, this city is actually the opposite. Christ Himself speaks badly of the temple, the temple leaders, the temple practices and ultimately pronounces judgement on the whole city. Jesus with mourning laments the city because of its historical rejection of God. And, of course, Jerusalem will in a few days fully reject God's Son and Messiah, torturing and condemning Him to death within the city walls.

And all this struck me when I realized the cries of praise, *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”* were shouted outside the city. It struck me that this is a picture of our present!

Bear with me here. Jerusalem, with its rejection of Yahweh and Jesus as Savior, with its rejection of His call, *“Repent and believe the Gospel,”* is very much like our fallen world. Think about it. Nearly all the Jews were looking to Jerusalem's temple for peace, prosperity and deliverance but it was empty of the ability to deliver on anything. The Holy of Holies was absent the presence of God. But God incarnate dwelled among them shoulder to shoulder yet they refused to recognize Him because His message of humility, loving service and forgiveness wasn't the message they wanted to hear.

Likewise the world promises joy, fulfillment and happiness if you reach the right level of success, hang out with the right social group, ride your Peloton daily and build your best life now for yourself. Its temples are many; drugs and alcohol, wealth and possessions, home and family, career and social standing, etc. Like Jerusalem, people think this life is the center of all things,

when in fact it offers no lasting good to those who trust in it. Quite the opposite. Like this life, Jerusalem was doomed to destruction just like Jesus said.

And just like I think that joyful triumphant procession broke up as Jesus and the disciples entered the crowded city, it seems that a lot of our focus, joy and enthusiasm for Christ tends to get muted and distracted as we deal with the hustle and bustle of our lives in the world. It's just the truth—It's hard to pray and drive at the same time. It just is.

Jesus taught, preached and did miracles in the city, but He constantly met with opposition there also. It's the same with the church in the world. It's the same with Christians in the world. Jesus is in and with you here in the world, therefore it shouldn't be an easy fit...and we should beware of becoming at ease in this city.

Think of how many Jews felt that they were just fine doing the temple thing because that's what the world, the leaders of Jewish society, said was good and right. They went about their business, made their proper sacrifices, observed the feasts and such, and were good with all that while never really looking for and trusting in God's promise of Messiah. Then He actually arrived and proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of heaven, but they ignored Him because they were busy with life in the big city. How many were alarmed and troubled when the radical rabbi began to shake things up in their city? How many were kind of relieved when Pilate supposedly removed Jesus from their context?

I think many believers can find themselves getting comfortable in the Jerusalem that is the world today. We're busy with life in the big city, so to speak, and we're not inclined toward anybody, Jesus included, to be messing up our life here. We look in the mirror and see someone who is doing things pretty rightly according to the world, according to our society and culture, hey, even according to the church...I mean we're here on Sunday, right? But where is our joy, our passion, our life really centered? Is it in the Christ arriving in glory, or is it in our life inside the city walls?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow citizens of this life, we are blessed in the present that Messiah comes to us here. He has come into your personal Jerusalem and proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven has arrived for you in your Holy Baptism. He is here, upsetting your comfort with the world by claiming you from the fallen world in declaring you righteous in His Word. His body and blood is fed to you, this very day bestowing that which is life eternal in the midst of a existence that stands dead and condemned. Where then shall we find our comfort? In this world, this life, this Jerusalem that is surely passing away? Surely not!

The rejoicing is in that which is outside the walls of this life! Our joy is in the Savior, our praise to that eternal King sitting at the right hand of the Father. Yes, He is with us now in the Word and Sacrament, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit sustaining us in faith. He does not leave or forsake us! So where do we focus our joy, passion, love and trust right now in our present—in that which is beyond the walls!

What is it that took place outside of Jerusalem? The cross! The resurrection! The ascension to glory! Jesus dead, risen and reigning forever! And that is where we rejoice in Jesus saying, *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

People, do not get too caught up in this earthly life. This life is like ancient Jerusalem; it has a lot of neat stuff going on and it's a good place to live, but it's not going to last. It's fallen, and none of its promise will last unto eternity. Salvation is not found within this life's walls.

Joy and salvation is in Christ alone, in the death and resurrection of Jesus, in the Baptism that in the present brings you through death to this world and to life in the kingdom of heaven this very day and into eternity.