

O Jesus, blessed are You who comes in the name of the Lord! You are the Holy One who bore my unholiness; the Perfect One – my wickedness; the Innocent One – my guilt. You came to have my sins laid on You so that Your righteousness could be laid on me. Still You come to me bestowing these blessings upon me. Hosanna in the highest now and forevermore. Amen.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "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." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and He sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the Prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

In Christ Jesus, who always comes to His Church even as She awaits His final return, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", dear fellow redeemed (*and especially you our dear confirmands, Lizzy and Grace*):

Have you ever noticed that in our Communion liturgy we sing the words from Palm Sunday in the Sanctus right before the consecration of the bread and wine: "*Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*"? We do not sing *Blessed is He who came in the name of the Lord*. Now it is true every time we celebrate the holy meal *we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes* as Paul tells us. But we are not receiving the sacrament for purely historical recollections. Rather, Jesus promises to come to us here and now. So, as we consider our text, let us realize the great importance of this truth: **Blessed Is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord! - Not Just Came.**

I

The fact that Jesus came is not insignificant, of course. He fulfilled the promises of God since the time when there were only two people in the world and then again when the population was reduced to eight people. All the promises recorded by Moses, the Psalmists and Prophets were fulfilled by the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, rose on the third day and ascended to heaven. As we read in our account this was a fulfillment of a

prophecy by Zechariah: “Behold, your King is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”

All these were the great acts of our salvation carried out in real time. So, blessed is He who came in the name of Lord to save us all. Not only have you all learned these blessed truths of Jesus’ salvific acts, we regularly rehearse them in the recitation of our creeds. In that ritual of confession we speak back to God what great things He has done for us and all sinners.

The world in general recognizes the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, that He was crucified and that a worldwide religion was formed around His person. But that is as far as it goes. They too know that Jesus came. Even the devil recognizes this and more, because he knows Jesus to be the Son of God. Two demons once confronted Jesus by saying: “What have You to do with us, O Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” But what the unbelieving and demon worlds do not have is faith in the Savior who came. Now Jesus did come for the unbeliever, but He did not come for demons. The devil and his demons are already condemned.

Most of you (*I know especially our confirmands*) have had NT Bible History instruction and know the works of Jesus very well and how they benefit you the sinner. But if Jesus’ coming was relegated to the past only, it would do you all as little good as knowing the facts and statistics of famous people in history. They may be inspirational certainly, but being impactful beyond this life cannot be the result. They serve you only as far as the grave.

By the following Friday and Saturday when Jesus’ lifeless body was laid in the tomb, the disciples were trying to make sense of what had transpired beginning on this day of Palm Sunday. How Jesus instructed those two disciples: “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.”

Then “they brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and [Jesus] sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting.” Quite a contrast between the crowds that received Jesus with a hero’s welcome on Sunday and cried out: “Crucify Him, crucify Him” on Friday morning. As far as the disciples knew, all they had was a historical accounting of the highs and lows of Jesus’ last week. Even though Jesus told them about the resurrection in three days, they were not preparing for this glorious event. They were focused only on the terrible past events and would have been stuck with “Blessed is He who **CAME** in the name of the Lord.”

The Palm Sunday crowd was quite correct: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who COMES in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" We are right even to this day to sing this out as we do in our Communion liturgy. Jesus comes to us desperate sinners here and now, just as He has promised – "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

On Thursday evening of this Holy Week Jesus instructed His disciples saying: "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. ... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." By the Word, Jesus comes to us. It is not the word of condemnation, although that word truly needs to be spoken and heard, it is the Word that gives us life and sets sinners free.

Right after that familiar passage, John 3:16 we read this: "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him." Jesus, our Savior, comes to us to save. His purpose of coming to us is not to condemn us, even though each one of us deserves to be condemned everlastingly on account of our sin. It is always a gracious coming and thus we again rightly sing: Blessed is He who **COMES** in the name of the Lord.

This week is more than a historical recollection of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. Again, we rehearse the accounts of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, because what things were done to Him and what He accomplished were done to and by our holy Substitute, our Sacrificial Lamb of God for the benefit of all sinners. We do not gather together simply to contemplate information, but to hear the content of the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. This Good News is the means which the Spirit uses among us not only to create faith but to strengthen faith. With that word of the Gospel the Spirit brings Christ to us right here and now. As He comes to us, we receive the blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Lutherans live in the present, not just in the past, as Scripture clearly instructs us. On the altars of much of American Christianity, they often have Jesus' words inscribed "Do this in remembrance of Me." Fine words indeed, but as we noted earlier: we do not receive the sacrament for purely historical recollections. In the Holy Supper we receive in real time the body given and blood shed of our Lord Jesus. Blessed is He who **COMES** in the name of the Lord! Lutherans rightly highlight these words: "This is My body. This is My blood." Jesus comes to us right now in the midst of our lives of misery and pain as we struggle with our sin and its many consequences and He gives us the only medicine that brings us healing and life.

"When [Jesus] entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, 'Who is this?' And the crowds said, 'This is the Prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.'" In the minds of many it was a great prophet, miracle worker, who came to them from Nazareth having just raised Lazarus from

nearby Bethany. But for you, you have been blessed with a faith in what many in that crowd acknowledged: "Hosanna/save us now Son of David! Blessed is He who COMES in the name of the Lord! Hosanna/save us now in the highest!" He comes with the blessing for you of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Imagine if all we did was spend our time here together to review history lessons about Jesus. (*Lizzy and Grace, you are two very good students and history no doubt comes easy for you.*) Why we would need to come here? to review things we know very well? That would be unfulfilling. Rather, instead Jesus comes through the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

One of the casualties in this year of pandemic concerns has been receiving all the ways in which Jesus comes to His people. The enemies of Christ lurk about and delight in this. Understandably for some who are most vulnerable to the effects of the virus, they have been missing out of Jesus' body and blood; but also have not received Jesus' gracious presence in the mutual conversation and consolation from their fellow Christians. Jesus **COMES** to us in these ways even today. May your Lord grant you full appreciation of what that Palm Sunday crowd recognized: Blessed is He who COMES in the name of the Lord! Do not face life with merely a history lesson, but live now with Jesus coming to you as He has promised. Amen.