1st Sunday in Advent
Texts: Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 21:1-11
November 30, 2025

The Simple Tone of Advent

It's nice when everything just seems to come together nicely and work out. If you're like me, it doesn't seem like it happens too often. But… today is one of those rare times that everything has fallen into proper place and made things relatively easy (at least from a sermon perspective). Today, as you well know, is the first Sunday in the season of Advent. For those of you who don't know, our theme for our midweek worship services this year is focusing on the concept of ***"simplicity" and keeping things simple.*** How very fitting, then, that the lessons appointed for this first Sunday in Advent do exactly that—***keep things simple***—setting the tone, not only for today, but for the entire Advent season. This is what this penitential season Advent is all about, and these lessons get right after it!

"Let us learn His ways and walk in His path of righteousness. Let us walk in the light of the Lord." Talk about making things simple? St. Paul says this, *"'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up very simply in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"* He goes on to say, *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."* Simple, straight-forward, and right to the point. Now I don't mean, in any way, that putting any of this into faithful practice is simple. By no means! But it's pretty simple and easy to understand why these particular simple and straight-forward lessons would be the first thing we hear as enter into this time of repentance known as Advent. Are you always walking in the light of the Lord? Are you always loving your neighbor as yourself? Are you always making ***no*** provision for your Old Adam sinful desires? I know the answer, and so do you. ***Repent. Simple enough.***

And as for the Gospel lesson… the Gospel lesson really sets the simple tone for the season of Advent in the fact that we hear, not of Christ's nativity or the events immediately preceding that miraculous day, but of ***Christ's Palm Sunday procession***, which led ultimately to the cross six days later. ***Let there be no confusion or distraction! Our Lord Christ draws near.*** This is what Advent is all about. This is what Christmas is all about. This is what the entire Christian faith is all about. Jesus Christ took on flesh for the **sole purpose** of taking that flesh to the cross as an all-redeeming sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. It's as simple as that. God in the flesh came to earth in order to keep His promise of salvation, which He first made to our first parents in the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin, death, and damnation. So here we have it, right off the bat; immediately out of the gate, this Gospel orients us to this simple fact; to what it's all about—our Lord Christ advents—He draws near.

Okay… but what does this have to do with us today? ***Interesting you should ask!*** The prophet Jeremiah, preaching roughly 600 years before Jesus would be born, answers this very simply and plainly, speaking of God's grace and mercy in all three tenses—***past, present, and future.*** He speaks of what God did with the Israelites in the past when they came out of Egypt. He speaks of the future, when "the days will come" and God will make good on His promise by raising up a messianic heir of King David. Most importantly, he speaks of God's gift of grace, mercy, and peace in the ***ever-present tense***—*"God IS our righteousness."* It's not "God will be our righteousness," nor is it "God became our righteousness." *"God IS our righteousness; our salvation." (Jer 23:6).*

Folks: These past, present, and future tenses regarding God's free and unmerited gift of righteousness are what Advent is all about. Yes, 2,000-some years ago Christ did come to earth and took on our flesh. He did go to the cross and die and rise again. *"It is finished!"* He spoke those words in the past, but note how they are ***present*** tense. This means that "it" (the all-atoning sacrifice for all sin) is **never** to be repeated. There's no shelf-life or expiration date or qualifier, as if only His part of the deal is finished, and now we need to finish what's left. Nope. ***It is finished!*** Because of this all-redeeming reality, even though we stand two-thousand years on this side of the cross, we can say the same thing that Jeremiah said 600 years before Christ: *"God IS our righteousness; our salvation."*

Look to this font. Look to the altar, the pulpit, and the lectern. Your Lord still presently comes to you and draws near to you by means of His Word and His sacraments. *"Where two or three gather in My name, there I am."* ***Well…here He is!*** And just like that first Palm Sunday, it's not exactly a big, glorious event filled with all kinds of royal pomp and circumstance, is it? The Greenwood football team enters onto the field to a bigger show/greater fanfare. No royal procession. No band. No chariots. No warhorses. It's not like a head of state is coming to visit. The welcoming committee isn't a delegation of the best and brightest. No one "important" is there to meet Him or welcome Him in. Rather, the welcoming committee consists of the ***lowliest of the townsfolk*** throwing down their cloaks or waving palm branches.

Again, look to the font. Look to the altar, the pulpit, the lectern. No royal fanfare. The heavens don't rend. The earth doesn't quake. The lights don't even flicker. All you see is lowly bread and wine. You see plain ordinary water. You see a donkey in a robe reading words from a book. ***Not very impressive, is it?*** Certainly nothing that would go viral on social media. As far as a welcoming committee, let's face it: It's not even enough to get people out of bed or to look up from their phones or whatever else it is that we do that we deem "more important." Folks aren't willing to give up one hour of time for this, ***and yet…here is the Almighty Himself.*** Here is the King of kings, with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. ***Here is our righteousness/salvation, in our midst, making***

us holy and righteous in His sight. By faith, we know this, but we also know that this isn't the end of the story.

We know that Christ ***will*** advent with us again in all glory and might. When will that be? That we don't know. Nobody but the Father knows. This is why St. Paul urges the Christians in Rome (and all who hear these words) to basically "wake up." Paul speaks with a ***tremendous sense of urgency.*** *"Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The day is at hand."* I know you've already heard it more than a few times, but it bears repeating: If you knew when Jesus would return in Judgment, would it change you? Would you stop doing certain things, and start doing other things? Would your priorities change? **If so, why?** If you're such a good Christian, then why would your priorities ***have*** to change? ***(And they would change, wouldn't they?) Repent. It's as simple as that.***

Folks: This what the season of Advent is really all about. Look to the past, and praise God for His great workings and gifts of righteousness and salvation. Look to the present, and praise God for His great workings and gifts of righteousness and salvation. Look to the future, and rejoice, for Christ, who **IS** your righteousness/salvation, is coming to take you home to Him—body and soul complete—and He ***will*** be your righteousness for the rest of all eternity.

That said, may this ***past, present, and future advent reality*** of your Lord, your almighty God and King, your righteousness and salvation, help you to "wake up" and get your faithful priorities straight. Look in the mirror. Examine your life. Take an honest inventory. Get back to basics; back to the simplicity of Christ-centered repentant faith. No excuses. No elaborate reasons and rationales. **Simple Christ-centered, repentant faith.** May the first and most important things be truly first and most important, not just on Sunday mornings, not just when you feel like it or when it's not inconvenient, not just in Advent, **but always.** And here's the thing, and this is what I'll leave you with: When repentant faith does get back to and focus on the ***beautiful simplicity*** of this Christ-centered Advent reality—past, present, and future—there is a hope and joy and peace that truly surpasses all understanding. It's as simple as that, and I pray that this reality is your reality, now and into all eternity.

AMEN