

Advent 1
November 29, 2020

“The Lord’s in charge” (Mark 11:2-3)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our coming King! Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow palm wavers and fellow confessors of the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord,

Today’s text for this first Sunday of the church year, this first Sunday of Advent, is from our Gospel reading, Mark 11:2-3.

“and He said to them, “Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. 3 And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it,’ and immediately he will send it here.”

Here ends our text.

How many of us like things to go the way we planned them? We like to feel organized and have things happen when we want them to happen. Right? Well, 2020 has been a test of patience hasn’t it. Our planning calendars have been tossed out the window and we’re flying by the seat of our pants. Well, even though we have felt less in charge this year, this also works for our good – for our humility – to always remember who’s in charge.

We begin the new church year just as we ended it – with the Lord in charge!

He’s never stopped being in control of our lives this year. God didn’t take the year off. No, He promised us before He ascended into heaven.

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Immanuel! God with us! Our altar paraments remind us this Advent season that Jesus, the Son of God, did come to us. He did rescue us and promises to lead us, care for us, defend us, and come for us again!

This isn't just wishful thinking. Jesus says "surely"! Yes, when we feel like nothing is going the way you planned it in this upside down 2020, remember this word "surely". Surely Jesus is with us!

Yesterday's Lutheran Hour Daily Devotion was written by the first Lutheran Hour speaker, Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier. If you haven't heard it, I highly recommend that you listen to this 5 ½ minute devotion sometime this week. It's titled "Your Unbreakable Word". It's based on **John 10:35 - (Jesus said) "Scripture cannot be broken."**

It cannot be changed. Scripture's judgments of sin are 100% definitive and certain. But, most importantly God's Gospel promises are absolutely reliable, certain, and cannot be broken.

Let me quote you a portion of his devotion which describes God's unbreakable law and Gospel.

"For the unbroken Word of God tells us plainly that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20a). We may squirm under this sentence upon our sin and the doom of the sinner, but the unbreakable Word of God cannot be altered.

And neither can His promises!

Therefore, let us raise our praise filled hearts to thank our Heavenly Father for His unbroken Word of grace, every promise of His unfailing mercy, every pledge of His unchanging love, every assurance of His unending compassion."

I. The Lord's in charge of the salvation of the world

Which brings us to the donkey...that the Lord needed. It may seem like an insignificant animal, but it was a significant detail that Scripture included and that could not be left out. For Scripture cannot be broken. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 had to be fulfilled just as it was written.

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

The omniscient Lord knew where the donkey would be. He knew what the owners would say, and how the disciples should respond. Jesus’ plan, the way He wanted to save the world, when He wanted to save the world was meticulously laid out and fulfilled to the last detail.

Jesus is in charge. He’s in charge of the world’s salvation. And with the securing of the donkey, it was happening within the week. On that never ridden donkey, Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the highest of purposes, to accomplish that which was never accomplished - the salvation of all mankind. And He needed a donkey to accomplish this eternal plan. Indeed, the Lamb of God was slain from the creation of the world. (Revelation 13:8).

And this moment foreseen from eternity was now rushing to its fulfillment with the sending out of the disciples to fetch the donkey. We just sang in verse one of “Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates”, based especially on Psalm 24.

Behold, the King of glory waits. The King of kings is drawing near; The Savior of the world is here. Life and salvation He doth bring; Therefore rejoice and gladly sing.

Jesus, true God, draws near on a donkey. Jesus, all powerful, omniscient, King of glory, is in charge, on a donkey! He’s in charge to accomplish our salvation in the only way possible – to humble Himself to the point of death on the cross. He humbly rides into Jerusalem on His chariot of humility – a donkey.

In the Greek Island of Santorini, when visitors get off the cruise ship, they take a boat ride to the island and then have to ascend a steep 600 climb up the cliff to get to the city. How do they do it? On a donkey. It’s quite the tourist attraction. It’s humbling trying to ride and control the donkey, but at least the donkey does the most difficult work of climbing that would leave most gasping for air.

Jesus chose a donkey as His means of transportation to *go up* to Jerusalem. He humbly rode, in charge of His destiny and ours.

When He would not put up a fight against His betrayer, Judas Iscariot, He was in charge. He even humbly washed his feet just earlier. Jesus is in charge with His love that cannot be broken.

He's in charge as He allows Himself to be arrested, beaten. And then He climbed the steep mountain of Calvary. He alone could climb it and save the world.

He's in charge as He's crucified and killed. If you're really the Son of God, come down from the cross! If you're really in charge, show us! And He did, by NOT saving Himself and coming down from the cross, by not deviating from the plan to pay for our sins – all of them – it is finished!

That this plan was so well conceived and perfectly executed, Jesus rose again on the third day – in charge! Success! Victory! Yes, I'm in charge. Look at my hands and side! I'm alive and there are no more donkeys to ride... no more sins to pay for... The King of Kings is exalted and extends His victory to all people.

What's next is for all people to humbly submit themselves to God. The Lord takes charge of repentant hearts and forgives them. He is in charge of your life now and eternally.

II. The Lord's in charge of your life - now and eternally

In verse two of our hymn of the day we sang:

A righteous Helper comes to thee; His chariot is humility, His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter, pity in distress. The end of all our woe He brings; Therefore the earth is glad and sings. To Christ the Savior raise Your grateful hymns of praise.

The almighty King comes to rule in your heart. We lift our heads to His kingdom of grace. For He rules with compassion and pity for our sinful distress and brings an end to all our woes.

How? Our righteous Helper gives us His eternal righteousness through faith. **“See your King comes to you, righteous and victorious!” (Zechariah 9:9)** He comes to you through faith. **“The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17)** We've been hearing this verse every week since especially Reformation Day. And on the last day He calls His sheep, the righteous (Matthew 25:37,46) as we heard last week. He calls them blessed of His Father, for they are united to the Trinity through the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord. United through our baptisms, the

Blessed One has come to us with His washing of regeneration. He's in charge of your life.

“being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

When Jesus is in charge, He rules believers' lands, cities, homes with peace and joy. For they are set free to live in freedom. So, we sang in vs. 3 of our hymn of the day.

How blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the ruler is confessed! O peaceful hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes! The cloudless sun of joy is He Who comes to set His people free.

And your life of happiness under the King Jesus also includes the joy of serving Him. As Jesus needed a donkey for His plans, He has need of you, who are much more important than a donkey! For you are His brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow coworkers in the Gospel. So, we sang in verse 4.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; Make it a temple set apart From earthly use for heav'n's employ, Adorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov'reign enter in And new and nobler life begin. To God alone be praise For word and deed and grace!

What nobler life is there than one in service to the King of Kings!

And finally, the hymn concludes reminding us that Jesus is in charge of bringing us to our glorious end, ruling our hearts through His word and sacraments until that day, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Redeemer, come and open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide! O enter with Thy grace divine; Thy face of mercy on me shine. Thy Holy Spirit guide us on Until our glorious goal is won. Eternal praise and fame We offer to Thy name.

Yes, we begin a new year, still in the saddle of Jesus grace and forgiveness, riding humbly through life with our Lord through the tests that we face, knowing that our omniscient, almighty, all loving Lord is in charge, now and always. That's the unbreakable promise of His word! Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)