

And the crowd that went before Him and that followed Him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest." [Matthew 21.9; KJV]

Today is the first day of a new Year of Our Lord! Where the world would teach you to believe in your personal works and your personal rewards as the focus of your life in a new Civil Year shortly to come upon you, the Church teaches God-given faith and unmerited grace in the perpetual Year of Our Lord.

Where the world would teach you each year to join your culture in praising the Church just so long as she serves up food, clothing and shelter, and otherwise stays hidden behind stained-glass, the Church is focused on the perpetual Year of Our Lord, serving up the forgiveness of sins within its walls and proclaiming an absolute morality from God that reveals sin and the need of forgiveness throughout the world. It is the universal message, for the whole world in the perpetual Year of Our Lord.

In Advent, the bride waits for her groom, who is Christ, the Lord, and while she waits she believes that her Lord's coming is not far off. The perpetual Year of Our Lord brings with it the message that you, together with all who are bonded to you in the Church, wait for a kingdom yet to come. So, while your life is lived fully in this world, your life is not of this world.

Our true redeemed and forgiven life, is yet to come, so that our daily living is but the shadow of the life that comes when Christ returns. Therefore, in the perpetual church year that begins anew this day, the voice of faith cries out, in the collect of the day: "Stir up, we implore You, Your power, oh Lord, and come, that by Your protection, we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance."

I.

With the words of this historic prayer, the church publicly declares that what you need is something different, something totally unique from what the

world is seeking. And during Advent, you confess what it is that you need in order to prepare for Christmas. What you need is not to make a New Year's resolution that you then strive to keep. What you need is not the emotional feel-goods of the season to get you "in the mood" for Christmas. What you need is not something that is fine-tuned to be just about you.

What you do need is what God's Word in the Season of Advent proclaims to you. It is the promise of the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord. In response to this promise, the church teaches her faithful children to cry: "Oh Lord, Come! Come with Your protection that we may be delivered and rescued from the threatening perils of our sins."

Have you seen this message anywhere in the world's preparations for Christmas? Of course not! That is why the Church leads her children through Advent to Christmas! As the perpetual year of our Lord Church continues, faith prays, "Come quickly, Lord, so that all that we think and say and do from our sinful hearts, and all that comes from the world that leads us astray, might not consume us. From all that threatens our salvation in daily life, by Thy power, deliver us." You need this Advent, this coming of our Lord, precisely to save you from the world's thinking that tempts you to think that this coming year may be better than last year.

II.

On this first Sunday in Advent, you hear of the Lord's coming into Jerusalem in the Holy Gospel. Today is the appropriate day for the reading of this text. For in it you not only are reminded of the Lord yet to come on the Last Day, but you are also reminded of the Lord who comes among His people perpetually, in the here-and-now that leads to the Last Day.

In the reading and exposition of this text, you have the fulfillment of Christ's Words and actions as you hear of it. This function of God's Word is often missed by Christians, namely, that God's Word DOES what it DESCRIBES as it is proclaiming it. Where the church fails to teach this, and

thus where Christ's Real presence and true voice is not taught, the reading of the Gospel is reduced to that of a history lesson about some event in Jesus' life or some behavior of Jesus that you should try to imitate and maybe have a better than average church year..

But our churches teach that Christ IS actually present in the hearing and teaching of His Word, for when you hear the Gospel of the forgiveness of your sins, that is not some mere historical statement that God once said about the sins of the world. The Gospel you hear proclaimed in God's Church today IS the voice of Christ Himself being heard TODAY! It IS the voice of the Blessed One who comes and remains here, as He rode into Jerusalem two millennia ago. He comes and perpetually remains as your Savior from all that threatens to steal you away from Him. The promise of His presence, TODAY, is what you get from God as you hear of

Christ moving into the midst of the city of Jerusalem. Each and every time you gather together in Jesus' name around His Word and Sacrament, you have the same real Jesus who was present in Jerusalem according to the text is now here in your midst – this same Jesus, now speaking His Holy Word from the lectern, proclaiming His saving grace from the pulpit, feeding you His body and blood in His Supper! With each unique reading of the Holy Gospel, you are perpetually present with the whole Church, where Christ is present here and everywhere where you hear His voice. And so, today's Gospel draws you anew, to join your voices with those Galileans with palm branches in their hands surrounding Jesus, and there all sing together, in this Year of Our Lord, continuing the perpetual Communion Liturgy, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."