

How Shall We Greet the Coming King? ¹

✧ **Preparing** (vv.1-6)

✧ **Praising** (vv.7-10)

In the Name of Jesus our King, dear fellow forgiven, mercied subjects of His Kingdom:

THE KING SHALL COME is not something we often hear in America. After the Revolutionary War, George Washington refused to let his grateful fellow citizens crown him king. “What were we fighting for?” he asked when some wanted him to stay on indefinitely as the first President of the United States. Instead he stepped aside to allow for new elections under the new Constitution of the United States of America. Washington humbly reasoned others could serve our Republic, still blessed today.

That is not the case for our heavenly **King**. His disciples argued over who was the greatest. How many Americans are so seared in their souls that they have no care for unborn children or innocent Jewish citizens? Sinners want power at the expense of others. “*When the foundations are being torn down, what can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3 EHV) We need a perfect **King** to do what no mere mortal could.

Advent comes again to prepare our hearts to celebrate His coming that first Christmas, and to watch for Christ’s second and final coming on Judgment Day. Thankfully, Christ keeps coming in Word and sacrament to answer, **How Shall We Greet the Coming King?** With His disciples we are eagerly...

✧ **Preparing** (vv.1-6)

For centuries Christ’s church on earth has begun **Preparing** in Advent with Jesus’ divine glory still hidden in His story of Palm Sunday. That’s right, we prepare for Christmas by remembering Jesus’ triumphant, but humble ride into Jerusalem to suffer and die on the cross. This is why He was born.

Look carefully. Listen well. It’s so easy to miss His omniscience, the fact that as God, Jesus Christ is all-knowing. *As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’”* (1–3 EHV) He know just what they’ll find and what they need to say. But will it turn out that way? **Preparing** as Christ commands means His disciples go confidently, trusting His Word.

But stop and think about this a moment. The fact that Jesus *needed* anything shows how He “*emptied himself*” (Philippians 2:7) of the full use of His divine power in order to be our humble Savior from sin, death and hell. Jesus shows Himself to be our sympathetic and faithful High Priest and King. (Hebrews 4:15f) Still today He could accomplish His saving purposes simply by speaking a word or by using His angel armies. Instead He washes and sanctifies sinners by the Holy Spirit in Word and sacraments, to carry out His bidding to fill the *needs* of His Kingdom. Faith-born love moves forward... trusting.

Jesus’ divinity is written all over this account in simple, straight forward language easy to miss. His disciples found exactly what He predicted, said what He commanded, enjoyed the outcome He promised. Along with His *omniscience* shines His *omnipotence* as the Creator. Don’t try this at home or on the farm. You can’t ride an unbroken donkey’s colt especially with its mother nearby. But our all-knowing, all-powerful **King** Jesus can. But why not ride a powerful steed or steer a chariot into His capital city?

¹ 2023 WELS Worship Foundations series: *THE KING SHALL COME: He Is Coming to Save Us.*

☆ Praising (vv.7-10)

Is that what the people were expecting, a conquering king? Eagerly they shouted: ***“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”*** (9f) How many of the same voices were raised only a few days later? We don’t know, but mobs can be fickle. So, Jews cried out to Gentiles on Good Friday: ***“Crucify him! Crucify him!”***

But are we truly innocent of such attitudes? ***Listen, the LORD is making a proclamation to the end of the earth. Tell the daughter of Zion: “Look, your salvation is coming. Look, his reward is with him, and his compensation is out in front of him.” Then they will be called holy people, the redeemed of the LORD.*** (Isaiah 62:11f EHV) Isaiah praises God’s power in our First Reading where stubble burns, water boils and nations quake in God’s presence. ***“You meet anyone who joyfully practices righteousness, who remembers you by walking in your ways! But you were angry because we sinned. We have remained in our sins for a long time. Can we still be saved? All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth. All of us have withered like a leaf, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. There is no one who calls on your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you. So you hid your face from us. You made us melt by the power of our guilt. But now, Lord, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand. Do not be angry, Lord, without limit. Do not remember our guilt forever. Please look closely. All of us are your people.”*** (Isaiah 64:5-9 EHV) No earthly king could save us from our sins or make us right with God.

We’re too much like Paul’s “problem child,” the Corinthian congregation so talented, but sometimes so stuck on their own opinions. Something changes which we didn’t see coming or weren’t asked about, and we blurt out condemnation for whoever. Every one of us gives God good reason to turn away from our natural born self-pride, self-righteousness, narcissism. We think too highly of ourselves. Meanwhile, the Lord commands us to be filled with the Spirit by ***“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” “In humility consider one another better than yourselves.” “Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”*** (Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3; James 1:19) Why are we so the opposite?

Because of our sin that we too must cry out with this Hebrew word: ***Hosanna! Save us now, we pray!*** Save us from our own conceit, from our own stinking filth of sin. Don’t abandon us to our own foolish errors because even on our best days our best intentions ***are like filthy rags.***

How Shall We Greet the Coming King? Watch Jesus. As the all-knowing God, Jesus knew what lay ahead that first Christmas where the poverty of a manger was just one step down in His State of Humiliation all the way to death on a cross. Almost there, that first Palm Sunday, He keeps riding, riding on in majesty, in lowly pomp He rides on to die. Even for those who would condemn Him. Even for Paul who would persecute Him in Christians. Even for you, and yes, even for me! ***Hosanna!*** we greet our **King**.

In such overwhelming grace Paul is **Praising** our **King**, opening his letter to the Corinthians: ***“I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:4f EHV)

All that matters is **grace** – on you, on me, on God’s people. From way outside us comes this undeserved love of God who condescends to us in our low estate. He carries all our guilt and shame to the cross. Christ suffers and dies in our place to make us free citizens of heaven and joyful servants of the Most High God. And so, with Mary in the weeks before Christmas we **magnify the Lord**. We humble ourselves with John the Baptist who said of his Lord Christ, ***“He must increase; I must decrease.”***

How Shall We Greet the Coming King? Preparing for Him who puts us on the right side of history because history is HisStory of grace and goodness for all who put their faith in Him. **How Shall We Greet the Coming King? Praising** with loud ***Hosannas!*** ***Lord, come, save us for your mercy’s sake. We long for you!*** Amen.