

Wednesday of Ad Te Levavi, A²D 2010

Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 21:1-9

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 What would you do if you could meet the president? If you can set aside your thoughts about the man, be they adoring or abhorring, and concentrate on his office, what would you do? How would you dress for such a meeting? How would you spend the days and hours leading up to your audience with one of the most powerful men on earth?

2 Advent is such a season, a season of preparation, a time of weeks and days and hours to prepare for an encounter, an eternal audience with a King. He is coming, heralds Advent. There is a King coming. Be ready. Prepare yourself. He will come with pomp and fanfare, with an awesome spectacle that everyone will see, with a trumpet blast and a fanfare that everyone will hear, with a company of attendants that will impress everyone. Jesus is coming again. He is the King of kings, a King unlike any other, with more power than any earthly ruler, with all authority in heaven and on earth given to Him.

3 Let that sink in. You are waiting for a King. The prophet Isaiah was sent to prophesy to a people who already had a king, the southern half of the divided kingdom of Israel, Judah. In the midst of this rebellious people, a people neck-deep in false worship and mired in sins of all sorts, Isaiah prophesies about a two-fold outpouring of God's wrath. He warns the Southern Kingdom of the impending destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, which had not had a righteous king since the kingdom split after Solomon's reign. He uses the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the country of Assyria and the carrying of the people out into exile as prisoners of war as a warning to the Southern Kingdom: Do not be like your northern neighbors.

4 And yet, in the midst of the warning about the complete destruction of the nation of Israel by the Assyrian army, Isaiah has these words of comfort: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

5 The Israelites thought that with a powerful king, with the right guy in control, they would be safe from foreign armies. So they tuned their ears to prophets who supported these vain hopes. They found preachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear, what they wanted to be true: no disaster could come to them. There is nothing new under the sun. Old sins and ancient contempt for the Word of God remarketed themselves as new and trendy. People still seek for milquetoast preachers who will confirm what they already think, what they want to believe. More popular than the crystal clear Word of God which calls sinners to repentance and delivers the healing salve of forgiveness to guilt-stricken consciences, are the words of therapists and counselors who will work on you from the inside, to boost your self-esteem, to improve your feelings of self-worth. None of this was able to stave off the outpouring of God's wrath against the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. None of it prevented the exile of God's chosen people. And none of it can save you.

6 But there is hope, even in exile. There is hope for the people dwelling in darkness. The promised King is not like the wicked kings of Israel, not like the worthless kings of Judah, not even like righteous Josiah or Hezekiah, the only two good kings. This King is called Wonderful Counselor. And He came as the fulfillment of the words of the prophet, as the Wonderful Counselor to give healing and hope to people exiled in sin and death. He came as the promised child, born of the Virgin, upon whose shoulders the Kingdom of Heaven rested. He came as the Infant King, born to reign from the throne of the cross. He is a King like none other, the King born to die for the sins of His people. And He is a Counselor like none other. You are waiting for your King, the Lord Jesus.

7 Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, whose words of forgiveness bring healing and restoration. He is the Counselor King who leads His people out of exile, who gathers them to Himself in the waters of Holy Baptism. He is the King who reigned from the throne of the cross and the Counselor who spoke His healing "Father forgive them" from His throne. He is the King who still reigns in His Word and Sacrament and the Counselor who in Holy Absolution speaks the words you need to hear: I forgive you. He is the King who reigns on His Altar at His Supper and the Counselor who keeps you in His care until the Day of His return.

8 Take heart. You have a King. He is the Wonderful Counselor whose words heal, forgive, and give hope until His return.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Jeff Hemmer