

Wednesday of *Ad te Levavi*, A ✕ D 2008

Matthew 21:1-9 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth-phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

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

1 Remember; repent; rejoice. This is the pattern of Advent, the cycle of the season. Remember; repent; rejoice. The season of Advent calls to mind the mighty work of God's salvation. It calls you to remember what the Lord has done for you. And it calls you to repent. The whole season is one of repentance in preparation for the second Advent of Jesus Christ. Repent, says Advent. The One who worked salvation for you is coming back for you; don't be found unprepared. Lastly, Advent is a call to rejoice. Rejoice that God has wrought salvation for His people. Rejoice that He has given you His gift of repentance. Rejoice that He has forgiven your sin. And rejoice that He will return to claim you as His own eternally.

2 Remember, remember, remember, calls Advent. And yet how quickly we forget. If you've ever watched anyone afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, you know the pain of seeing a person who can't remember. You know the slight pain of having to hear the same stories repeated over and over. You know the moderate pain of hearing the same question several times in a few short minutes. And you know the stinging pain of having a loved one—a spouse or a parent or a grandparent—forget your name, your face, your

relationship to him. Watching someone die the blessed death of faith is perhaps less painful than watching them forget who you are.

3 If you know the pain of being forgotten, you have a small window into the pain the Lord feels at being forgotten by His people. Several chapters before today's Old Testament reading, the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah announced to His people, "Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Thus says the LORD, behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.' "But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.' "Therefore thus says the LORD: Ask among the nations, Who has heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a very horrible thing...But my people have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads." (Jer 18:11-16)

4 "My people have forgotten me." The people the Lord rescued from slavery in Egypt forgot Him. Those He brought into the Promised Land forgot Him. Those he blessed with wealth and prosperity and security in the reigns of David and Solomon forgot Him. Good thing you're not like faithless Israel. Good thing you aren't quick to forget the Lord and make sacrifices to false gods. Or are you? Every time you put your trust in anything else, you've forgotten the Lord. Every time you go back to your old sinful ways, the slavery of sin from which you were delivered, you have forgotten the Lord. Every time you're reluctant to come to the place where the Lord gives out His gifts, the Divine Service, you've forgotten the Lord. Truth is, it's just not in your nature to remember well. Repent.

5 The Lord does not forget sin. Jeremiah announces, “Thus says the LORD concerning this people: ‘They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins’” (14:10). He is not like you. He does not forget the past. He remembers your sin. And yet, by the middle of Jeremiah’s prophecy, the Lord promised His new covenant, the one of which He said, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.”

6 How can that be? On one hand, He remembers your sin. On the other hand, He promises to forgive it and forget it. Listen to the song of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

7 God remembers His covenant, His promise to deliver His people. So He visited His people, in His first Advent, the birth of the Son of God in human flesh. His blood is, in His own words, the blood of the new covenant, the covenant of which Jeremiah spoke. It is the new covenant in which God forgives iniquity and remembers sin no more. It’s not that God has forgotten your sin. It’s that He has forgotten it belongs to you. In fact, it doesn’t. He gave your sin to Jesus. And because of the death of Jesus as payment for your sin, God has given you the righteousness of Jesus.

8 For the sake of Jesus, God doesn't remember your sin. And, not because He's forgetful, but because He delights to remember His mercy, God has given you a way to bring His mercy to His remembrance. Do this, He commanded, as often as you eat it, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me. In the Lord's Supper, who does the remembering? Well, you do, for one. Like the rehearsing of the story of salvation through the Church Year, the Lord's Supper retells you what your Lord did to forgive your sins: died for you. And what's more, the Lord's Supper gives you the forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. But you're not the only one remembering. "Do this for my remembrance," Jesus commands. He remembers, too. Everytime you, by faith, receive the Lord's Supper, God is reminded of His mercy. And He is reminded that you belong to Him. Does He meanwhile forget? Of course not. But He loves to remember. And He loves for you to remember.

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

Soli Deo Gloria

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