

# RORATE COELI (ADVENT 4)

December 19 2021

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Philippians 4:4-7

John 1:19-28

## ***Standing...***

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Advent is the time to hear John the Baptist—  
    who received a Divine Call to set up a pulpit out in the desert—  
        and call the nation of Israel to repentance,  
            baptizing them in the Jordan River.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

Go back with me a long time ago.

The Israelites were terrified.

The booming voice of God—along with thunder—the lightening—the smoke—and fire...

    They all reveal to sinful men the horrible power of God.

        It's no small thing to anger the God who hung the stars—  
            doing so easier than you hung your Christmas lights  
            or ornaments on the tree.

        It's no small thing to anger the God who scribed the Equator...  
            the God who set limits for the oceans...  
            the God that fills the highest heavens...  
            the God that breathed life into the first man.

                The Israelites of old were rightly afraid of Him.

                And they didn't want to stand before Him.

So, they beg for a mediator—

    Someone to stand in the breach so that they were not annihilated by the  
    holy presence of God.

        God had mercy on them, speaking to them through Moses.

To the trembling crowds He gave His holy law.  
 He gave them the Divine Service,  
 the priestly tribe of Levi, the priestly vestments,  
 and the sacrificial system.

He gave them everything they needed to be reminded  
 that God is a God of mercy.

A God of grace.

The God who dwelt physically  
 between the cherubim.

The God of mercy who filled  
 the mercy seat where the shed  
 blood of the sacrifice  
 was poured out for the  
 remission of sins.

Speaking through Moses,

God promised a better Prophet—a greater one.

One to speak for God to men.

One raised up from among men.

The Seed promised of old who would come in the flesh...

The Seed of the Woman wearing flesh to save...

Thus, from each generation

from Seth forward

looked for that Seed.

Moses himself said God would put His word in the Messiah's mouth,  
 speaking all that the Father had commanded Him to speak.

And all must submit to this Word,

else their souls be required of them.

1,400 years later,

John preaching in the wilderness of Judea and baptizing in the Jordan.

A delegation of priests and Levites is dispatched by the Pharisees  
 to check out this desert congregation

and interrogate this extremely unorthodox preacher.

They want to know if John was the One—

the One the prophets promised.

Yet, John confessed,

"I am not Christ."

Then he confessed that he was not Elijah.  
 Nor was he the promised Prophet,  
 like Moses raised up  
 from among his brethren.

In these questions we hear a yearning...

Because for millennia, men waited for the One who would save them,  
 deliver them from the curse of sin and death.

The Pharisees knew the Promise.

The Seed of the Woman,  
 the Seed of Abraham,  
 the Seed of David,  
 the Seed of Judah,

He would save God's people.

The Promised Christ would come and deliver.

So, you can hear the hope mixed with despair in the questions of this delegation.

Because fallen men are tired of fighting and wars and death,  
 of sickness and disease,  
 of broken homes and ruined lives,  
 of burying those they love.

Trapped in sin,

fallen men cannot free themselves.

This beloved is a trap you know.

For you too have seen the ravages of sin.

You have seen disease and death.

You have struggled with sin in your own life,  
 being hurt and hurting others.

You know that all sin leads to death.

You too need the long-Promised Savior.

Well, the delegation gives up.

"Who are you John and by what authority are you doing this watery work?"

John told them, He was a voice...

crying in the desert promised by Isaiah.

He was the forerunner,

who preached One greater than himself.

Of One who would come after him,

who was before him.  
 He preached the coming Messiah.  
 He preached the Promised Seed,  
 but it wasn't John.

You see, John baptized with water but there was One among them  
 whom they did not know.

He would baptize with a better baptism—  
 a saving baptism.

A baptism that gave the Holy Spirit.  
 And John both promised Him,  
 and pointed to Him.

For among them stood One they did not know.

The Lamb of God.

The perfect sacrifice.

The God who filled the mercy seat.

The God whose blood would be shed for the remission of the sins of all men.

He is the Lord whose paths John came to make straight  
 by calling sinners to repentance.

For as Israel feared God on Mt. Sinai,

So ought every sinful man tremble at the thought of the same holy God  
 standing on earth among fallen men.

For men must submit to His word  
 else their souls be required of them.

The washing of Jordan's water can never remove the stains of heart or the stains of soul.

Simple water can't remove sin.

John's washing in his command to repent doesn't take away your sin,  
 rather it convicts one of sin.

Because it bears to you the fiery law of Sinai.

So, taste of the Israelites terror—

Taste of their terror as you consider your sinfulness.

The corruption that you have known  
 in both body and mind.

Proclaim with Israel,

"Let me not again hear the voice of the Lord God,  
 nor see this great fire anymore, lest I die."

We should tremble as did they.  
 At the sure knowledge that God sees our sin,  
 and we will soon stand before Him when He comes with fire  
     to judge heaven and earth—  
     to judge all men—  
     to judge you.

Like the Israelites, you need a Mediator.

Someone to stand in the breach between you and a holy God.

So that you are not destroyed.

Moses won't do.

Neither will John the Baptist.

They too were sinful men.

But to that Mediator—

To that Messiah—

To that Anointed One—

both Moses and John point.

For He is the Lamb of God

whose shed blood atones for the sins

of all mankind.

He is the Prophet like Moses said,

raised up from among His brethren,

not to bring a new law,

but to fulfill the law for you.

He is God Incarnate.

God enfleshed.

Eternal God begotten of the Father before eternity.

God the Son—in the state of humiliation.

God with sandal straps.

God who knelt and washed the feet of His disciples.

God, whose own feet would be pierced

and on Golgotha, He would hang in the breach

suspended between God and men—the Prophet raised up

from among His brethren.

Though John was not worthy to lose His sandal straps,

the God who had sandal straps losses your sins from you.

He alone is worthy.

He washes you in a washing that truly cleanses you.

It makes you spotless and sinless and without blemish before God  
 by the power of His Word.  
 The God who dwelt between the cherubim  
 suffered Himself to hang between two thieves.  
 At the place where He was shown no mercy,  
 He was a mercy seat for you.

Beloved, reconciled to God in Christ, you do not fear His word—you hunger for it.  
 For you know that it is a word of peace—a word of reconciliation—a saving word.

And you do not fear His presence.

You pray for it.

You long for it.

You pray, "Come Lord Jesus."

You bid your coming Savior, "Come and come soon."

You pray, that He comes this day with bread and wine—  
 coming as He has promised to come.

Coming to release His holy church from the bonds of this world  
 and to free you to enter the world to come.

From Seth to John they awaited the Seed.

John was the last prophet—

the prophet to promise and also to see and to touch the Seed of the Woman.

God became John's cousin...

Mary's Son—the Son of God.

He is God, God Incarnate,

God among men for your salvation.

God ruling from His celestial throne.

God coming again soon.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and  
 minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.