

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

The Hymn of the Day asks the question, “O Lord, how shall I meet You, how welcome you a right?” That’s an important question not only as this new Church Year begins but as you consider your daily life in this world as a baptized child of God. Thinking about this, you see something is implied in this question and harkens to what you’ve been hearing the past few weeks, and sums up this season of Advent, Jesus is coming. Not only that but he is coming soon, so, then, how shall you meet him?

Well, maybe a good indicator of this is to ask to where or whom are you looking? This is where things get pointed because you see that when you hear Jesus is coming and examine yourself, you are confronted with the fact you are you not ready on your own to meet him. That’s because you are looking elsewhere and there are many things which seek to draw your eyes away from him. You are going to do it whether you want to or not or even whether you are thinking about it or not. You’re always going to be looking to something or someone. It’s unavoidable and really in our nature to do to do so. Man is a creature and creatures don’t exist on their own. They need to be created and sustained. Even when someone thinks he is self-sufficient, independent, or autonomous (a law unto himself) he is still guided and governed by certain principles and concepts. Man is by nature religious. He has a god. You don’t have to search long in the Scriptures to find this fact, it’s riddled with instances of false gods being created by men. In your lives you see how this happens. Look around you and you will see it in the world and in yourself.

You lift your souls and trust in what you see which includes what you hear both outside and from within. You are formed by these things, and it molds and shapes your thinking and believing. So what do you see? The Epistle reading is telling and reveals the sin within your hearts and the fallen world in which you dwell. God, through St. Paul, wrote. “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” How shall you meet the Lord?

When you take your eyes off Christ then you will see sin and its consequences. You will see sin in yourself, in others, in the world around you, and you will see death. All of this is around you so where are you going to turn and look to in this world for your help, comfort, and guidance? There are many things and people which will offer you a solution. Many of them will be appealing and many of them will sound like the easy way through life and put yourself in control. False gods have a way of doing that but then, at the end of the day, the curtain is pulled back and there is no deliverance. There are only demands, accusations, and no truth. There’s no forgiveness as well when you fail, there’s only you and yourself to make things right.

Sin has a way of ruling lives and being a king who rules not only outward actions but how you know and perceive the world. A god forms in ourselves, and we trust in what gratifies our desires on the one hand and what we are told is good, permissible, and should be celebrated on the other even if those are lies. But this is how a sinful heart works and why this is so imperative to know yourself in reference to God’s word.

God calls you to look at your life and confess your sin. The day is drawing near when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. There is an urgency to this in your life as you think about living in this world and who you are in it. God calls you to cast off the works of darkness which are those things which separate you from God and his kingdom, which has no end. The prince of this world is the devil, and he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour you. False gods take your eyes off Christ and onto hell. They also don’t love your neighbor whom God has placed around you and uses you to serve, love, and confess the faith to in this world. “Love does no wrong to a neighbor” because Godly love toward the neighbor flows from faith in Christ and is

guided by God's law which is good and benefits everyone around you. Take this all seriously. Don't look at those things which go against God's word, you have specific examples in the Epistle reading today, but cast them off and walk properly. Know who God has called you to be, repent. Know what governs your life and who is your king and your gods.

People of God behold the days are coming, says the Lord. Look! What do you see in this midst of this all? In faith, to look at him and see him for who he is as your King. And what is that who is he? "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden." God comes to you and lifts your eyes to see him. He is your King who is also God himself. He has come into this fallen world and rode through the streets in humility yet as the one who conquers. He is the King who rides on to die and take his life back up again. That's image before you in the Gospel reading today and as this new church year begins. Jesus comes to you and lifts up your soul to see him as your King who has come to redeem you. Everything comes to a head in Jesus, your King, your God, your Savior. Jesus prepares you to meet him for he has come and redeemed you. He comes now to forgive you through his means of grace, and he comes again to take you to himself even as he will create a new heavens and new earth for you and all his saints to dwell.

That hymn of the day is beautiful as it states so well how the Lord has had mercy on you and still does. Listen again to those words written by the great hymnwriter Paul Gerhardt: "Love caused Your incarnation; love brought you down to me. Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty. Oh, love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace in love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race. Sin's debt, that fearful burden, cannot His love erase; your guilt the Lord will pardon and cover by His grace. He comes, for you procuring the peace of sin forgiven, his children thus securing eternal life in heaven."

It doesn't get more beautiful than that in hearing and singing of Christ who has come down as your King. Love caused the incarnation of the Son of God in order that you would be redeemed from sin, death, and the devil and he has done. Let that sink into your hearts this first Sunday of Advent. Jesus came to save you and he has, it's finished. The victory has been won. Your idols are all destroyed as you see Jesus crucified for you. You see your King who has brought you into his kingdom and makes you an heir of all he has done. Who is God that he should do all of this for you? There is no other for he is the Lord, your Lord, who loves you, forgives you, and gives this all to you fully and freely. What a joy to have such a King, such a God who calls you his own? This is your Lord, Jesus, the Christ.

As if this wasn't enough God comes again and you lift your souls toward that day. Your prayer is answered in Jesus, your King who has come for you, is here now, and comes again. Even as he has come as your King to save you, he comes now in this very place to distribute and give out this salvation. Your King is gracious and his mercy overflows. Looking back on this work of Jesus you have it all now and at the same time are looking forward to the final day when all things are made new. To be sure, though, there is a warning to those who would remain unrepentant but for you, dear people of God that day can't come soon enough. Again, the Hymn of the Day beautifully states, "He comes to judge the nations, a terror to his foes, a light of consolations and blessed hope to those who love the Lord's appearing. O glorious Sun, now come, send forth Your beams so cheering, and guide us safely home."

The Introit for this Sunday sums this up well as you listen to where it directs you, "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." This is your answer, in faith, to the question, "O Lord, how shall I meet You, how welcome you a right?"

Ad Te Levavi—1st Sunday of Advent—November 27, 2022

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Lift up your soul and trust in him. Greet him as your King now and when he comes again in glory. Wait with eager anticipation and know that no one who waits for him, your King, will be put to shame. Meet and greet your King, Jesus, with great joy and join with your fellow saint, the Church, as you begin this new church year with renewed vigor, “Come, Lord Jesus! Even so, come quickly. Amen.”

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