**Coming in Weakness to Be Received by Faith**

Based on [Matthew 21:1-9](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt21.1-9)

The First Sunday in Advent

*Ad Te Levavi*

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Today’s Gospel reading is about the first coming of Jesus, not in power, might, strength, glory and majesty, but in weakness, humility, ministry. **“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”** And here’s the point Jesus comes in humility and weakness so he can be received--not by compulsion—but by faith.

On the Last Day, Jesus Christ will come in glory. Every eye will see him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. That day’s confessions will be by compulsion.

An illustration: If someone has wronged you, and you approach them and ask for an apology; they can make excuses, hold you in contempt; or even just walk away from you. They can ignore you because you come in weakness. **However, if you take them to court and they stand before the judge, they are compelled to give an answer for what they’ve done.** And at that time and at that venue, they can’t just walk away, nor can they refuse to speak, neither can they hold the judge in contempt. If they refuse to speak to the Judge they lose and receive the same punishment as if they were proven guilty.

One day everyone will be brought to courtroom of God. And one day Jesus will come as Judge. **Everyone will stand before His judgment seat and *be compelled* to give an account and he will render a final verdict.** He will come exalted, in majesty and glory, and he will not invite people to worship Him and confess the truth. On that day he wil compel it. This is why always, but during advent is stressed the need to be prepared. You can only prepare for Jesus second coming, by receiving him in his first coming.

Jesus’ first coming was in weakness. This is so that it is possible for him to be accepted or rejected. Kind of like the story of a young prince, who dresses in casual clothes or rags and goes out in disguise in order to find true love. **Because of his royalty, he could *compel* anyone to marry him; and because of his majesty, vain women would throw themselves at him and marry him for his money or his fame.** So in order to find someone who truly accepts him, he must make himself rejectable. The young prince dresses as a pauper to try and find someone who truly accepts him, and he knows she is genuine precisely because she could have rejected him and didn’t. She loved him before he was revealed to her in majesty and so accepted him for who he really is.

The almighty God of power and might, when he comes in weakness he shows us who he really is. “God is love” He says, “Come to me, for I am gentle and lowly at heart.” **In Jesus, it’s as if God is saying to the world, “Do you love the real Me, not just my power and strength and majesty and authority. Do you love Me for richer for poorer, in weakness as well as strength?**

There’s a significant difference between the story of the prince and Jesus. Jesus doesn’t deceive us by his weakness, or try to hide the fact that he is God. He is more like a prince who dresses like a pauper, but still tells everybody he’s a prince. The question is do they believe him, even though he doesn’t compel them to? Though Jesus is God, he did not use his power to compel people to come to him. And so you see the thing that made Jesus approachable to the weak was the very thing that made it possible for the strong to reject him…his own coming in weakness, inviting and not compelling people to confess his Name.

No one will be able to deny Jesus when he comes in glory. But accepting him in glory does not save the sinner. The sign of true faith is this, you accept Christ in his weakness, when he is persecuted, when the world laughs and scoffs at him, when hypocrites utter all kinds of evil falsely against him. **You are not simply a fair-weather friend…a Johnny-come-lately who is happy to align with Christ when he’s accomplishing miracles and drawing big crowds, but not when he is abused, hated and led to the cross to die.** To know God in his weakness, in the form of a suffering servant, is to know him by faith.

I don’t say this simply for you to evaluate whether you have been loyal enough to Christ. None of us are yet perfect, and even Peter, in surrendering to the spirit of the moment, denied Christ to avoid suffering. No, the only thing you can and should do about the past is to praise God for what you did right, and repent to God for what you’ve done wrong. Rather, you who have accepted Christ in his weakness are reminded of it **in order to encourage you and make it easier to suffer for Him and with Him, for His gospel**.

St. Paul, before his conversion persecuted and killed Christians. Then Jesus appears to him and says, “**Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME**?” // When Christians are persecuted today, Christ is persecuted. The fact God allows this persecution of believers proves that Christ still comes in weakness, to be received or rejected accordingly. God allowed Satan to persecute Job, who was such a righteous man God bragged about him. **God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery in Egypt. God allowed his only begotten son to die at the hands of evil men.** St. Paul had a thorn in his flesh, some temptation or persecution he was suffering of persistently. He prayed three times that the Lord would take it from him, but God said. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

We can look around us and see the moral fabric of our society coming apart at the seams. And taking it at face value it would lead us into a hopeless depression. **And there is constant temptation to either get with the times or keep quiet in the face of evil. We need encouragement to stand with Christ and be willing to suffer the consequences.** There are many instances in society and in the church where believers are being mistreated for being faithful to Christ. People lose their jobs and their reputation suffers, friends and family abandon them. But Jesus says that when you see these things happen straighten up and raise your heads, for your redemption is drawing near. //

Every seeming victory of the devil in this world only shows God’s word to be true. **So too, when people revile you and persecute you for following Christ, it’s not a reason to be afraid.** It’s a sign…a sign that you are a true believer who accepts Christ in his weakness, and that is reason to be confident and rejoice. When the final judgment comes, you will be called a good and faithful servant and be delivered out of this veil of tears to where eternal joys are found. And in the meantime we receive Christ in weakness praying Hosanna, Save us. Deliver us.

Advent is a time of spiritual preparation and anticipation of Christ’s coming in glory, but especially in weakness. **This account of Jesus riding into Jerusalem is teaches us not to let our guard down, or not to allow the truth of Jesus’ victory over sin, death and the devil deceive us into thinking that he now comes to us in Glory.** No Jesus came in weakness 2000 years ago to die; and he still comes in weakness today in the persecution of his church.

And we can endure this persecution and resist temptation now because we know that the final victory is secured. When we fail we repent and receive mercy, when we succeed we thank God for hallowing His Name among us. Despite the successes and failures of the church, we know how history plays out and how the story will end. **In the end, in God’s time, we will receive the prize of eternal life won for us by Christ’s work of atonement, and secured for us by the Holy Spirit.** Jesus says, “because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” On that day we will be numbered with the saints around the Lamb on the throne, clothed in white robes with palm branches in our hands crying out Hosanna, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.”