

JEREMIAH 31:31-34 / MATTHEW 21:1-9
KNOW YOUR KING.

In the name + of Jesus.

Today, we enter upon a new church year. The first season of the Church Year is Advent. Advent comes from a Latin word which means “to come to.” That is the reason our Gospel lesson includes the announcement, **“See, your king comes to you.” (Matthew 21:5)** And that is why our Psalm encourages the Holy City to receive her king by declaring, **“Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.” (Psalm 24:7)** Advent reminds us that the King is indeed coming. Therefore, we prepare with repentant hearts and expectant souls.

How do you prepare for your King’s coming? Do you think Jesus comes to see lighted homes, decorated trees, and frosted cookies? There’s nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves, but that is not how anyone prepares for the coming of their King. The only to properly prepare is to know your King who is coming to you. Only if you know your King can you know if you are properly prepared to meet him. St. Paul urges you to prepare rightly: **“Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Romans 13:12,14)**

We know that our King hates evil. He hates the evil that ruins our lives and our world. He hates the evil that men do against one another. And he hates the evil that resides in us and comes out of us. God has no place for those stained with evil. **Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.... (Psalm 24:3,4)** The Lord despises all who would rather gratify their fleshly desires than find joy in godly desires. But even if you do not go off to ponder different ways to gratify your sinful desires, you still have sinful desires. You do not have to go and find them; they find you. And even though you know these desires are sinful, you still give in to them. Your heart is not pure. You also engage in deeds of darkness, and so your hands are not clean. Therefore, God

Know your King, because your King knows you ... inside and out. Your deeds, your words, and your heart are not hidden from him. You have no dirty little secrets. No excuses or spin will fool him. The King knows whose heart is pure and whose hands are clean. The King delights only in those who are faultless. Therefore, repent; for your King is coming to you.

What is remarkable about your King is that he knows you with all of your faults and foibles, and he still loves you. Your heavenly King still desires to have you as his own. That is not because he is desperate or lonesome or needy. It is because he loves that which he has created. He did not create you to be discarded. You are not expendable to God. No, God created you and brought you into this world because he desired to love you and bless you. He wants to love and bless you for all eternity. Therefore, when your King comes to you, you do not need to run for cover. Your King is not coming to get you, but to save you.

Know your King. See how he comes to you – gentle and riding on a donkey. He is meek and humble. He did not come to lay waste to kingdoms or establish himself as a

world power. He did not come to bear arms or raise armies. He did not come to levy taxes or accumulate wealth. This King does not even come to establish new and stricter laws to make people behave better. Your king comes to you for one purpose – to establish a covenant with you that cannot be broken.

Know your King, and cling to his covenant. The prophet Jeremiah had foretold it: **“No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)** This is how you know your King – he is the one who comes to rescue you from darkness and despair. He comes to pardon the rebels. He comes to restore everything that sin has ruined. He comes to gather you into his kingdom.

Know your King; for he does not leave anything to chance. God himself has come to our world to rescue us from sin’s curse and all of its consequences. He knows that man has proven himself unfaithful to God’s commandments. So God became man and submitted himself to his commandments. He fulfilled all every law that has been laid upon you. He met all of God’s demands. He had no dirty little secrets. He did not resort to deception, for he was a faithful son in God’s kingdom. And there, dear Christian, is your righteousness. Your King did not leave anything to chance. He has done all that is demanded.

Know your King; for he did not enter Jerusalem to strut about and show off his holiness. Rather, he came to be stripped, and beaten, and executed. He left nothing to chance. He did not leave any sins behind. He did not leave any sinners out. He suffered and died for the whole world so that all sin would be paid for.

This is the love and mercy the King has for you. He establishes a covenant which will never fail you. He does not tell you what you must do to put it into effect. No, his covenant is his work. He came up with the terms. He put them into writing. And he has written them upon your heads and into your hearts. For, you were marked, you were cleansed, you were made God’s own through Holy Baptism. Through Holy Baptism, God purified you of all unrighteousness.

Now, you know that your King is coming again. And you do well to prepare the way for the Lord. To do so, you return to your baptism. You put off the deeds of darkness and put your sin to death through repentance. And God raises you up anew. He puts on you the armor of light. He clothes you with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you are clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are surely blameless and faultless in God’s sight. He has cleansed your hands and created in you a pure heart. He has renewed a right spirit within you. And if you have clean hands, then you will ascend the hill of the Lord. If you have a pure heart, then you will stand in his holy place. If you are faultless in God’s sight, then he truly delights in you.

Know that your King has left nothing to chance. The Lord has acted and continues to act to keep you safe and secure in his kingdom. The covenant is firm. It is so firm, in fact, that when you come back to your Lord with your sins – whether they are dirty little secrets or they are acts of public disgrace – the Lord does not declare his covenant null and void. No, the King’s covenant stands. It stands because it was signed in Jesus’ blood which was shed for you. And it was sealed when Jesus rose from the dead. Just as you cannot undo Jesus’ death and resurrection, so you cannot undo his forgiveness.

And this, dear Christian, is the King you have. He is more merciful than we can grasp. He is more loving than we can know. He came in the flesh to bless and save you. He comes to you in Word and Sacrament to deliver his blessings and salvation to you personally. And he is coming again to deliver you to eternal pleasures in his perfect kingdom. Therefore, prepare, repent, and rejoice. For it is Advent. And behold, your King is coming to you.

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