

Sunday: First Sunday in Advent

Date: November 29, 2020

Text: Mark 11:1-10

Title: Save us

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me.

In 2005 an animated film by the name of Hoodwinked! was released. It is the story of Little Red Riding Hood, told through the lens of a police investigation into the disappearance of Granny. As a child, the story of Little Red Riding Hood was told to me by my mother. I remember seeing variation on this childhood tale in various forms including Bugs Bunny cartoons. It is a classic tale. Maybe you remember hearing the story or perhaps reading one version or another to your children, brothers, sisters, nieces, or nephews. Maybe you just enjoyed reading it to yourself.

In Hoodwinked! the story begins with the scenario that Granny is missing. The investigators interview each of the main characters in the tale in an effort to unravel the mystery of Granny's whereabouts. From the end of the story, we are drawn back into the events of the past that work toward the resolution of the mystery, and the determination of what is next. Each perspective fills in details of the story that are hidden from view. Without the backstory, we miss the significance of the scene before our eyes.

As we begin the season of Advent, do you find it curious that the first Sunday of Advent in each year of our 3-year lectionary is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The gospel reading presents us with the final week of Jesus earthly ministry as the Messiah. In five days, he would be hung on a cross. He would be crucified for the sins of the whole world. It seems like we are jumping to the ending of the story, as we embark on a new church year.

Indeed, as Jesus enters Jerusalem the climactic events of the plan of salvation are unfolding. The world will never be the same. In Jesus, mankind is no longer waiting for the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah, but now sees the Anointed One in the flesh. No longer is salvation based upon faith in the promise of the Redeemer, it is faith in Christ, the Son of the living God, as Peter confesses.

From what appears to be the end of the story, we look back at what led to this point as they did in Hoodwinked! This means of examining the events is not new or novel in our world today. This is what Jesus did on the evening of his resurrection, as he walked toward Emmaus with two of his followers. Luke tells us of this event in his Gospel,

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

As Jesus enters Jerusalem in Mark’s gospel, the crowds line the roadway shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” (Mark 11:9-10).

As the crowd proclaims the coming of the Messiah, the Hebrew word “Hosanna” appears prominently. “Hosanna” meaning “save us.” The crowds gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, are calling for a new exodus from the slavery they find themselves. They are living under the thumb of Roman rule, with soldiers and government officials occupying their land. They seek a restoration of the kingdom of David. Jesus, the Son of David, is their hope for the new kingdom. Little did they know that the kingdom was with him. Further, the kingdom he inaugurates is not solely of this earth. In the now, this planet is the new kingdom, but there is so much more Jesus will bring to fruition. Jesus death will open the gates of heaven to all who believe in him. His return to judge all people will result in the re-creation of the heavens and the earth, into the not yet kingdom of paradise where we will see our Savior face-to-face.

“Hosanna,” “save us,” draws us back into the Scriptures as we see the promises of God repeated to his beloved creation. Beginning with Adam and Eve, God promised to save mankind. In Moses, he saved his people from captivity in Egypt, leading them out to his Holy mountain. Ultimately, he gave them the land that he had promised to Abraham when he saved him from worshiping idols and called him out of Ur. As Israel, strayed from being faithful to God, he punished them, but always drew them back to him as he forever honored his promise to redeem them. In David, God unified his people under one ruler, and pointed to the rule of

David's greater son, Jesus. This son of David, Jesus, is whom the crowds sing praises to in our gospel reading today.

The fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah, is what Isaiah prays for today in our Old Testament reading. His prayer for mercy is for God to

rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! (Isaiah 64:1-2)

On Good Friday, the skies will be darkened for three hours, from noon until 3 p.m. An unnatural event initiated as God rent the heavens. At Jesus' death the earth shook and the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. The hand of God, reaching into creation once again and making known his presence to his adversaries.

With an earthquake on Easter morning, the stone was rolled away from the empty tomb to reveal the glorious fulfillment of God's promise to save us. Jesus had risen from the dead. The plan of salvation was complete. Man was redeemed. We were, and still are, restored, through Christ, to a right relationship with God.

In this Season of Advent, we look forward to the birth of the Christ child. It is here that we see God breaking into human history with His presence in the child born of Mary. God, though never absent from this world, began the final chapter of the plan of salvation in taking on human flesh to Hosanna, to save us.

The heavens were opened and a messenger of the Most High God appeared saying,

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11).

As he concluded this grand announcement a multitude of angels, a heavenly choir joined him and sang praises to God. In the birth of this one child, the fire was kindled. The adversaries of God were made aware of the presence of the Messiah and many efforts to destroy him would occur. All would fail, thanks be to God.

The nations trembled and bent the knee to the King of Kings in his humble crib just as the Magi, men from the east, bowed down to the incarnate Son of God. In

recognition of the true king of Israel, the Son of David who would sit on David's throne forever, the travelers from the east, deliver gifts in honor of his royal birth. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh are laid before the Anointed One, the one who would save the world from sin, death, and power of the devil.

Just as in the animated feature "Hoodwinked!" the scene depicted at the start, depicts only a part of the story, Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is not the whole story. Looking back, we see the carefully crafted plan of salvation being executed with perfect precision. The promises of God to mankind, were fulfilled in his Son, Jesus. The calls to save us by the crowds leading to Jerusalem, are answered in Christ. The wait was over. Salvation was now.

The prophecies of the Old Testament, the prayers of the people were answered as the adversaries of God were overthrown. The gods of this world, the idols of man, and the people who would lead humanity astray were defeated in Christ. With the in-breaking of God into human history, the new kingdom of God was brought to earth. For all who believe in Jesus, there is forgiveness, salvation, and life.

This is good news for us today. As we struggle with life in this corrupted creation, we find ourselves, we have hope in what Christ has done for us. Our salvation is not tied to what we do. The Law does not point to the things we must do to merit salvation. If we had to follow the Law to earn our salvation, we would be without hope. There would be no need for a Savior if we could work our way to righteousness.

We know that we are all fallen. Paul reminds us in Romans 3:19-26,

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a

propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup>It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

This Advent Season, as we prepare for the celebration of the birth of the Christ child, we see the fulfillment of God's promise to reclaim us from the corruption of our hearts. As the child born in Bethlehem, fulfills the plan of salvation and accomplishes all that is needed for our redemption, we kneel before our God and pray "Hosanna", "save us." Without God, we are condemned. With God, through his only begotten Son, we are saved from our sin.

In this season of preparation, once again we are led to the manger and the child who is true God and true man. He is the one who will triumphantly march into Jerusalem, willingly give his life on the cross, and defeat our enemies. In Jesus, God has rent the heavens and come down, breaking into human history, and saved us from the fires of hell.

In faith, we pray for Jesus to save us. He does by washing us in the waters of Holy Baptism, where our sins are forgiven, and we are made heirs of the new kingdom. In the absolution we receive in our worship services, we are forgiven of our sins, and in the Sacrament of Holy Communion we are again forgiven of our sins and reassured of our salvation.

As we prepare for the Sacrament of the Altar, we sing the Sanctus, in which we share the song found in our gospel reading today.

Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Truly blessed are we who have been given the gift of faith. Jesus has saved us from our sin. He has paid the price for our trespasses. He has conquered our adversary, the Devil. He forgives us and promises to bring us to be with him in paradise.

Amen