

When Jesus Shows Up

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT [b]

December 3, 2017

I CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

When Jesus shows up, when the veil between here and Heaven and torn open, and God enters into his creation in a way that he can be touched, and heard with the ear, and seen with the eye—when Jesus shows up, what will the sinner say?

That's the prayer of the prophet Isaiah, that the Lord would tear open the heavens to come down and set things right. Isaiah 64:1:

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your face— ² ... to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your face!

That's the prayer of Isaiah, that the Lord would tear open the heavens, come down to Earth among sinners, present his face in such a way that all could see it, and the Lord's adversaries would shake and tremble.

God, who is infinite, and omnipresent, and all-powerful, and constrained by nothing, he will enter into his creation.

His creation is finite, and located, and limited by the constraints of the created order; his creation cannot contain or hold the infinite God who is not part of creation, but is the Creator who stands over all.

But God will tear into his creation, will take the finite constraints upon himself, letting himself be limited by what he himself has created, and will enter, and stand before sinners, so they can look at his face, and they will finally understand what God is about.

Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down, prays Isaiah, to make your Name known to your adversaries, that the nations would quake at your face!

The Lord's adversaries, these are those who do violence to his creation, those who introduce malice, those who bring in the lie, those who seek to overturn what God has created, those who harm his creatures.

The Lord's adversaries are the devil and his demons, who tempt men and woman to set themselves in judgement over God's creation, demanding that they be the ones to control it, instead of receiving it as a good gift from their Creator.

The adversaries are the devil and his demons also because instead of bringing the light of God's Word to the man and the woman and their offspring, they bring the darkness of their own word of accusation, sinking the man and the woman and their offspring into the swamp of guilt and the fear of death.

The Lord's adversaries are people themselves, the fallen world and all men and men and their children, who rejoice not in receiving gifts from the Lord, but in filling themselves full of their own desires.

And the Lord's adversaries are, also, us. It is us, as we live in our sinful flesh and hope to find our own way out of our guilt, justifying ourselves with our own efforts, finding ourselves afraid to look upon the face of the Lord.

The Lord's adversaries, when he shows up, will shake, and will melt.

So what is this face of the Lord which will be having the devil and the world and our own sinful flesh shaking and melting into nothing?

It is God the Son in the flesh, riding through the city gates humble and mild, sitting on the back of colt on which no one has ever sat, a colt designated and set aside to be the instrument to convey holy, infinite God into the city, and, riding through the gates, he is riding to his humiliation and death. His humiliation at the face of Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate; his death on the cross.

Why would the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh tremble at that?

Because, in that death on the cross, Jesus has put to death the sins of the world—the sins which he willingly took upon himself at his own Baptism—and putting the sins of the world to death in his own body on the cross, the devil and all his demons are emptied of their power.

For their power is the accusation. Their power is the Law of God which they throw at the sinner—at you and me and our children. Their power is using this Law to lock us down in guilt, smother us in shame, and usher us, then, into eternal death. That power Jesus has ripped from their hands, by himself dying the death having belonged to every sinner.

So the devil and demons shake, and melt, when Jesus shows up, for the accusing tongues they held against us have been torn out of our consciences.

And the world shakes and melts. This world, with its pretensions of cleaning up every little problem, of using human power and efficiency and raise itself up out its swamp of malice and death and fear, of progressing to a higher level of existence—this world is left shaking and melting at the face of God the Son saving the world not through power and might, not through progress and efficiency, but by coming humbly on the back of a colt to cleanse the world by giving himself over to death on the cross.

And our own sinful flesh, it trembles at the face of Jesus. For the ultimate sin of our flesh is not the lies and the thievery, the covetousness and the envy, the adultery and the self-centeredness—those are sins, and they do stand judged by God—but the ultimate sin of our own sinful flesh is the sin of self-justification. The sin of thinking that we can use the Law to clean ourselves up, to improve our sinful lives, so that we turn our eyes to our own works and our own following of the Law, turning our eyes away from Jesus, the Son of God, hanging on the cross, to justify every sinner purely out of his mercy and lovingkindness.

When Jesus shows up, when he makes his Advent, the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh trembles and melts.

And then we finally hear the Word of Jesus. Not just his Word of Law which we have had all along, even from creation, but the Word he came in the flesh to speak, the Word for which he tore open the heavens and entered the world so that we would hear his voice—it is his Word of Gospel, his Word of all sins forgiven, his Word justifying the sinner, cleansing your conscience and mine, and the consciences of our children.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, says the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 1:3.

Grace, as the Father sends forth his Son, as the Son enters from Heaven, making his Advent here among sinners: Grace as he forgives all sins and where there was once trembling, he creates peace; where there was fear of death, he brings life and the confidence of standing at the face of the Father cleansed and purified; where there was sinner turning against sinner in accusation, he brings reconciliation and joy.

When Jesus shows up, the sinner is called into fellowship with God.

Jesus, who made his Advent into Jerusalem on the colt's back, who will make his final Advent on the Last Day, to judge the living and dead and to bring his people into eternal life, he now makes his Advent among us.

He does it in such a way that we can look at him, we can touch him, we can hear him. He makes his Advent among us the preaching of his cross, in the Word of his Gospel, in his Body and Blood of the Sacrament, and coming among us, we join the voices of those who welcomed him into Jerusalem on the back of the colt. *Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord*, they said.

The Name of the Lord is Jesus, which means, ***The Lord saves***. Blessed is he, for he is bringing blessing to the sinner, to you and me.

In every way you are enriched in him in all speech and knowledge, says Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:5.

We are enriched by him; we are not lacking any gift; the Holy Spirit sustains us until the end by the Word of Gospel, so that we stand guiltless at the face of the Father.

That's the way the Father judges us. He judges guiltless, by the righteousness of his Son, Jesus, who makes his Advent among us.

That's the way we judge one another. We judge each other as those who are ransomed by the blood of Jesus and declared righteous by him, even though the devil would want us to be holding accusations against each other.

We have been, Paul says, enriched in all speech and knowledge. So we speak to each other in the enrichment of the Gospel, in the encouraging and comforting words of our Lord Jesus, all the while with the knowledge that when we speak with one another, we are speaking as those redeemed by Jesus and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

All this is a gift to us from our Father—he has given his own Son to make us also his children. 1 Corinthians 1:9:

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.