

**ADVENT OF THE WORLD'S SIN BEARER**

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church:

*All of you must have been wrapped about by the Lord Jesus Christ, but for the flesh all of you must not continue to make provision – for strong desires.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

This week we give thanks as a response to the Lord's Service to us that He has allowed us to enter into a new Church Year. The end of the old year called us to being ever watchful for the Day of the Lord. Now, the Word again begins to call us to watch for God's coming. We, in these next weeks hear of His coming as the world's sin-bearer; as the Judge of the world; as the Coming One foretold by the prophets; and as the Christ (Anointed One) of God.

This year, that was marked by the re-introduction of the Introits into God's Service. These are the more ancient Psalm verses read, chanted or sung, that were selected long ago to "move" the Pastor and Assistants from the floor of the Nave, to allow them time to enter into the Sanctuary in the Chancel. Each Sunday, a Deacon or Assistant proclaims the Antiphon (literally, "against voice") in order to introduce the Introit. It is from the Latin translation of the antiphon that the Sundays of Advent get their names. Today that is *Ad te levavi*, or, "Unto You, I lift up." Following that, the prime verse of the Introit is the one which the congregation sounds forth after the Deacon or Assistant proclaims the Antiphon. That central congregational verse represents the whole of the Entrance Psalm for the Day. It also informs the Gradual which is declared by the congregation as the readings transition from Old Testament to Epistle.

For those who are concerned, we have not "discarded" the weekly Psalms. Rather, we will be hearing them from time to time where they were intended to be read: in other services of each week. You are also free in Christ to read them daily. In fact, if we were to follow the English tradition (as I personally do), from which some of our orders of Service trace their roots; we would hear all 150 Psalms publicly read through daily

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<sup>1</sup> *Romans 13:14.*

services each month! (Think: *Evening Prayer*, etc). If you think that is a bit much, God inspired this to be written in the Psalms, *Seven (times) in the day I praise You for the judgements of Your righteousness (Ps. 119:164)*. With the entrance of all of that into your ears, hearts and minds, hear a different translation of the theme text selected for today in this New Year:

*All of you must have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, but for the flesh all of you must not continue to make forethought – for strong desires.<sup>2</sup>*

That New Year text stands as a comfort and a warning for the faithful. Consolation comes from the repetition of the revelation that you have been clothed with Christ Jesus. Literally, as it was translated earlier, you have been wrapped about by the Lord Jesus. That word behind that thought is often translated like this, “clothed in Christ,” or “having put on Christ.”

It may help you to think of this being wrapped about as being swaddled in Jesus. Swaddling is still used in many cultures to allow a newborn baby to feel secure when resting apart from a parent’s arms. For the Christian, in Christ spiritually your arms and legs are bound softly and firmly next your body. They are protected and prevented from grasping that which is not eternally good for you, and for flailing about and spiritually hurting yourself.

To have put on the Lord Jesus Christ means that you are freed to rest securely in Him. A human baby, wrapped up in a warm fuzzy blanket, is kept from grasping for the strong desires of its flesh. There is the warning in the text. You who are wrapped about by the Lord Jesus Christ free to simply rest in Him.

He knows what it is to be bound for you. His hands were held fast by iron which kept His arms wide-spread upon the cross. His legs were kept from flailing by the nails in His feet. He, Who by His love for you was wrapped in your sins, was bound in them onto the tree of the Curse. He Who made no provision for His mortal flesh – to save Himself from death – make full provision to free you from your sins, and death and hell.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:14.

All of that, and more, is what His Advent into Jerusalem on the last week of His mortal life meant for Him, and for you. Hear again how our Introit, Entrance, into Advent Epistle (Letter) begins:

*And with this, all of you know the season, that hour has come [in which] all of you were raised from sleep. For now, for us, the salvation is nearer than when we believed.<sup>3</sup>*

This is the season given to move us to repentance in preparation for the Nativity of our Lord, in which we are given to recall that God has raised us from the soul-sleep which leads to eternal death. The purple of our Advent Tree and frontal is used to display the mourning over sins that Jesus came to take away. The wonderful music of this special season of God's triumphal hour reminds us of that. You who were attentive to the music of the prelude may have been reminded of words which you later sang in the Hymn of the Day:

*God the Father was His source, Back to God He ran His course. Into hell His road went down, Back then to His throne and crown.<sup>4</sup>*

In the coming of Jesus into the Holy City in that week of His Passion, the Season which began in the Father's sending of the Son into our flesh to bear the sins of the whole world drew to a close. That means that today we celebrate the Advent of the world's Sin-bearer. How might the music of the day continue to declare that reality? You who will now be attentive shall soon know (and, I pray, give thanks for the due diligence and care the musicians of this congregation put forth in selecting that which preaches Christ into our ears, hearts, minds and out of our lips each week)!

The words of the texts – in hymn and readings – for this new season show it to be a time of hope, peace, joy and love. As the Holy Spirit declares from that which you all have heard this day: *all of you know the season*. This is the time, which most of you by now remember parallels Lent, in which we particularly recall the price God paid that we may be raised from death's dread sleep. It is a time, with Palm Sunday and Passion Week

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 13:11.

<sup>4</sup> Ambrose of Milan (tr. Grobrien, Gifford A.). *Lutheran Service Book* # 332, "Savior of the Nations Come," St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006.

realities still rumbling about our heads and in our hearts, to reflect on how near our Salvation truly is – far nearer for us than for those emotionally joyous and expectant multitudes who greeted the King of kings in His humility. The Holy Spirit guided the mind, and then the mouth, of St. Paul to declare that which was written for the ages: *For now, for us, the salvation is nearer than when we believed.*

The man whose words formed that eternal witness did not believe in the Salvation Who entered into Jerusalem when the crowds shouted “Hosanna!” (Which means? “Save Now!”) that day long ago. Paul did not then understand that which you will sing later. That is, to “sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord” is to call upon Jesus as the Anointed One of God to “Save now!” by shedding His life blood into death that the faithful might be raised from death to life in Him. Before Paul was saved now by the death of Jesus, he was in darkness, as were all those who were not looking for the Christ of the Scriptures. The Apostle confesses that which remains true for all who are not living in the light of Christ:

*The night advanced, and the day draws near. Then, we may have put off the works of the darkness, (and) we may have been wrapped about by the weapons (defensive armor) of the light.<sup>5</sup>*

That Passion Week, the night advanced to full term. On the Day of the Lord, in which the Author of Life died, the sun was darkened. The earth shook. The rocks were spilt. Those who had fallen asleep – died – in the Faith were raised to life and seen in the Holy City.<sup>6</sup>

By the time St. Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to record that *the night advanced, and the day draws near*, he knew what those words meant. He had been convicted of his sins of rejecting God-in-our-flesh. He had been, through the Word, turned from the darkness – literally as something like scales had covered his eyes when Jesus called him to repentance. He was literally cast into darkness, even as he truly, “saw the Light” by

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<sup>5</sup> *Romans 13:12.*

<sup>6</sup> cf. *Luke 23:44f., Matthew 28:51ff.*

which he was blinded. Just so were you when you were conceived and born in trespasses and sin.

Paul, forgiven and restored even of the charge of murdering the Body of Christ in the persecution of the followers of The Way of Jesus, Paul looked up to behold the Day of the Lord drawing near. He took that which he learned from the crucified, risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, and delivered it for the Body, including for you today. He teaches that which one, you, may “see” clearly in the Light of Christ, that

*We may, then, destroy the works of the darkness, and we may be clothed by the weapons of the Light.<sup>7</sup>*

The weapons of the Light are that which you receive when you are clothed with Christ. That enwrapping in the Lord takes place in Holy Baptism. It is symbolized here as newly baptized persons – two of whom many of you have recently witnessed being wrapped about in Jesus – receive a burning “torch” and a white robe. Those are visual images that teach to those willing to learn, that in Holy Baptism, God clothes you in the Light, and swaddles you in Christ. That means, when the Father looks upon you in the Lord Jesus Christ, He sees you reflecting His light and covered in Jesus. His perfect obedience envelops you. That remains true as you return to your baptism each day, until it pleases the Lord to fully remove you from the darkness of this fallen creation into the eternal light of the heavenly Holy City.

Those divine truths then free you, us, and all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill the next words of the Letter to the Romans. You are liberated by God in Holy Baptism. In the water and the Word you have been bound tightly in Jesus to empower you to:

*by day decently to have continued to walk about, not (in)carousing and drunkennesses, not (in) unlawful sexual intercourses and debaucheries, not (in) strife and envy...<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 13:12.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 13:13.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, those are personal sins from which you have been freed. They are religious practices that are accepted, even encouraged, by those who are in the Church but not of the Church. Remember, you now live in a culture which has reverted back to considering as acceptable obscenities which were deemed “normal” by first century AD Roman pagans. You have the example of that which befell Rome some 400 years after the Holy Spirit moved St. Paul to commend the faithful in the freedom they have from such things. The city fell, she was ransacked, the Vandals were triumphant. Her glory was carted off, and she has not again ascended to world domination (though a few of our congregation members will recall the free world fighting against Axis powers led in part by a man who had dreams of a restored Roman empire, Mussolini).

Ancient Rome rotted morally and materially from inside. Her pagan peoples grasped for the pleasures of the moment, following after gods of this world. Christians then, as now, were tempted to libertine excesses, and to acceptance, or at least tolerance of their culture’s values.

Yet, the Apostle was not moving the people of the Faith to some new moral philosophy by calling them away from such things. His words were used by the Holy Spirit to focus believers on the Salvation which remains nearer to each generation than when they first believe in Him, that is, the Savior, Jesus. The focus on the Day of Salvation in this text prevents the words we are hearing today from reducing Christianity to a moral way of life. The call is to remain in the Light of Christ which drives back the darkness of this fallen creation is where the emphasis lies. This takes us full circle to our theme text as we enter into this Advent Season:

*All of you must have been wrapped about by the Lord Jesus Christ, but for the flesh all of you must not continue to make provision – for strong desires.<sup>9</sup>*

God has brought us again to the season of hope, peace, joy and love, all wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has given us another year to watch, prepare, rejoice and

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 13:14.

behold the reality that we have been clothed in Christ and freed from the darkness to live in His light.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Advent I (*LSB* one-year series)

Introit, Psalm 25, Psalm of Day, 24; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 21:1-9

November 29, 2015

*Pastor Michael L. Morehouse*

***Solī Deo Glōria***