

Come, Lord Jesus! He Did Come – He Does Come – He Will Come

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, daughters and sons of the King, to whom we pray “Come, Lord Jesus:” Probably most often when we pray that prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus,” we follow it up with, “be our guests and let these gifts...” because we’re sitting at the dinner table, ready to eat a meal. But today we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” not because it’s time for supper but because it’s time for Advent. Today we begin again the sacred season of Advent, and we come full circle to the start of a new church year. We return again to the window on the far left, the Advent window. You can see the four Advent candles for the four weeks leading up to Christmas; you can see the star of David, reminding us that the Savior who comes to us came from the house and line of David; and you can see the cross within the scroll, because Jesus’ coming was foretold in the Old Testament scriptures – like our reading for today from Isaiah 2. Here Isaiah shares a vision of Jesus’ coming, and what that coming of Jesus means for the world. So today, on this 1st Sunday in Advent, we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” and we rejoice in the fact that he did come, and he does come, and he will come.

Vs. 2 (the last days are the New Testament era, the days in which we live right now, between Jesus’ 1st and 2nd coming). I’ve been to that mountain, Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, the very hill where the temple once stood. In 2009 I was part of a study tour that visited the Holy Land, and I climbed “**the mountain of the Lord’s temple.**” I’ve also been to Pike’s Peak in Colorado, which rises to an elevation of over 14,000 feet. Compared to Pike’s Peak, Mt. Zion, at under 3,000 feet, is relatively unimpressive; it’s not very tall at all. But here Isaiah sees a vision of Mt. Zion raised up far above the mountains of the world, towering over them in glory, with people from all over the world streaming to it. **Vs. 2.** And this doesn’t mean there’s going to be an earthquake or a seismic shift that causes the temple mount in Jerusalem to literally shoot way up into the air and shatter elevation records. No, Isaiah sees this mountain huge not in size but in importance. The most important events in world history took place on Mt. Zion, when Jesus did come. It all culminated in Holy Week – which is why today we see Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus did come, as a King, as a warrior King. He came into his capital city to wage war against Satan and defeat our enemies of sin, death, and the devil. And he did it on this mountain. The same plot of land where countless lambs were sacrificed for sin is the same plot of land where the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the world, on the cross. Then, just a few feet away from the crucifixion was the tomb that Jesus entered dead on Good Friday but exited alive on Easter Sunday. I’ve been there, too. There’s actually two sites not far from each other – the Garden Tomb and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher – and scholars debate which is the actual tomb of the resurrection. I’ve seen both. I don’t know which one is authentic. But it doesn’t really matter, does it? In that general vicinity, on Mt. Zion, at that very location, the Son of God was crucified for our sins and came back to life for our justification, so that we could be saved, forgiven, redeemed, and brought to heaven. There’s nothing more important in the history of the world than these events, which all took place on this mountain, when Jesus did come. That’s why the mountain is huge in Isaiah’s vision – not huge in size but in importance. **Vs. 2.** Christians from every era and every area of the world gather together on this mountain – not the literal mountain in Jerusalem, but the mountain that is God’s church. And there on this mountain, in the Holy Christian Church, they and we gather to worship and praise our Savior for everything he did to save us – his birth, death, and resurrection – when long ago he did come.

Jesus also does come. **Vs. 3ab.** The mountain is God’s church, and all these people, all these Christians want to be there. They’re excited to be there because this is where Jesus comes to us and speaks to us and teaches us. **Vs. 3c.** From this mountain, from God’s church, the word of the Lord is proclaimed, and the gospel sounds forth. And so, the way Jesus does come to us today is through his word, and through his word made tangible in sacrament. Jesus enters our hearts by faith: through our ears, when we hear the word; through our eyes, when we see and study the word; through our mouth, when we receive his body and blood; and upon our flesh, when baptismal water runs over us. This is how Jesus comes to us today. **Vs. 3c.** Here “law” doesn’t just mean law that condemns; it means law and gospel, all of God’s word. In his law, the Lord shows us our sin, our need for a Savior, and the objective reality of our guilt before God. But in his gospel, the Lord shows us our Savior from sin and the objective reality of our once condemned but now redeemed status before God, because of Jesus. And this all-important message of scripture is revealed to us in God’s word, in law and gospel. **Vs. 3bc.** And every time you hear the word, every time you come to worship, every time you receive the sacrament, Jesus does come to

you, to strengthen you and teach you, guide you and remind you, forgive you and empower you. Do not take that for granted or despise preaching and the word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it – because through his word, Jesus does come.

And finally, we pray “Come, Lord Jesus” to the one who will come. Isaiah is looking far into the future when he writes: **vs. 4**. What a marvelous picture of peace! I’d love to live in a world with that kind of peace! But this can’t be talking about literal peace on earth, can it? In my last sermon I talked about World War 1 and World War 2 and the war in Ukraine, because in Matthew 24 Jesus himself said, **“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (24:6-7)**. He promised war, and now we have a promise of peace? When, and where? Not now, and not here. In New York City, at the international headquarters of United Nations, the organization tasked with promoting worldwide peace, there’s an outdoor monument called the Isaiah Wall, with these words of scripture inscribed upon it: **vs. 4bc**. But will this ever be true for our planet? No! We see war and bloodshed all around us, all the time – that’s what we see! In fact, when you look at this prophecy of Isaiah, really there’s nothing here we can see with our eyes. This mountain of God’s church towering in importance over the world and teeming with eager worshipers? That’s not what we see! Today Christians are considered naïve myth believers and hate-filled adherents to an outdated religion, and it seems like the church is crumbling all around us as more and more people reject Jesus. Worldwide peace; no more training for war? That’s not what we see! Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom – that’s what we see! And what’s even worse: we have the tendency to believe what we see. The dire circumstances of the world around us cloud faith’s eyesight and cause us to doubt this beautiful vision as anything more than a fairytale. Satan whispers in our ears, “Don’t believe the Lord; believe what you see around you.”

But seeing doesn’t have to mean believing. Don’t trust what see; trust what Isaiah saw: **vs.1a** – a vision, given to him by God himself, which he wanted Isaiah and us to see and believe. Jesus will come again. He promised he would; the angels at his ascension promised he would. And someday, when Jesus comes and brings us to himself, we will have perfect peace, this kind of peace: **vs. 4b** – rifles into rakes and guns into garden tools. **Vs. 4c**. That’s the peace of heaven that Jesus will give us someday when he comes again. And guess what: when you’re on the Lord’s mountain, in his church, you get a piece of that peace right now. The peace of God that transcends all understanding guards your hearts and your minds right now (Php 4:7). The peace on earth, goodwill toward men the angels sang about at Jesus’ birth is yours right now (Lk 2:14) – because right now, by faith, you do believe that Jesus did come, that he does come, and that he will come. You don’t have to wait for heaven to know God’s peace. You **vs. 5b** right now, because **“God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”** In contrast, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6, 4)**. But as a believer in Jesus, you **vs. 5b**. Your sins are forgiven; your Savior died and rose for you; your Father in heaven loves you; nothing in heaven or on earth can separate you from his love; he’s brought you to his mountain, his church, where he teaches you his ways so that you can walk in his paths and have peace.

Today, on this 1st Sunday in Advent, as we begin a new church year and once again cry out “Come, Lord Jesus,” Isaiah’s vision shows us that Jesus did come, and that he does come, and that he will come. Come, Lord Jesus! God bless your Advent.

Isaiah 2:1-5

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ² In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³ Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.