

Luke 19:28-40

Advent 1C + December 2, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church + Boise, Idaho
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Glory and Peace

The Word of the Lord from Luke 19:37-38: "The whole multitude of [Jesus'] disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'" This is the Word of the Lord.

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

It always seems a little strange to begin the church year with a gospel lesson about Palm Sunday, but that might be because we're good at getting Advent wrong. Advent is not merely the run-up to Christmas. I've said before: If Advent and Christmas are sisters, Christmas is the beauty queen that everybody crowds around at parties while Advent gets overlooked and elbowed away. In reality, Advent is all grown up and stands by herself with an important message that you dare not miss. She's like the narrator who appears at the start of a Shakespeare play to set the stage for all that is to come; and on this first Sunday of Advent, everything that you will hear for this new, entire church year is summed up in this cry of the Palm Sunday crowds: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Peace and glory, glory and peace. The King comes to bring glory and peace.

Nobody doubts that God is glorious: it only makes sense. By definition, God is almighty and holy. He's bigger than you are, and so He's worthy of admiration – or at least fearful respect. Even if people get everything else wrong about God, they usually consider Him to be glorious, emanating light and power. They might see Him as angry or merciless or uncaring, but they still see Him as glorious. Even some of the most mocking portrayals of God that I've seen usually still imply that He's surrounded by glory; otherwise, He wouldn't be God.

As Advent sets the stage, it says that the Word that you will hear throughout the year, then, is all about the glorious, Most High God.

The God of glory is also the God of peace; and I think – *I think* – that most people will eventually conclude that God is ultimately about peace too. The big question is how exactly this glorious God establishes peace

There's more than one way to make peace, after all. People are most familiar with the world's way – the way of power. Kings and nations establish peace by utterly destroying their enemies; and when there are no enemies left, there is no more war and so there is peace. If utter destruction is out of the question, then the next best thing is peace through intimidation: project enough strength so that your adversaries know that any sort of war would be so costly and futile that it's not worth breaking the peace. It's an uneasy peace, so much so that it's often called a cold war. It may be among nations or within a family around the dinner table; but among peoples saturated with original sin, simmering, repressed hostility is sometimes the best you can do.

If that's the sort of peace that people know, they're going to expect God to establish peace the same way: and if God is glorious and all-powerful, He doesn't have to settle for compromise. He can choose to go totally scorched-earth in His dealings with humanity, and no one can stop Him.

This leads to a next question: if this glorious God can establish peace right away, then why doesn't He? Apart from the Gospel, the answers aren't happy ones. Maybe God is like a cat toying with a mouse, watching the chaos and havoc of this world before He grows tired and dumps the universe in a garbage can and moves onto something else. Maybe He's willing to discuss terms of peace, and He's waiting for you to come up with a suitable offer of good works that would make Him let you stick around a while longer. Apart from the Gospel, the best you can hope for is a glorious God who's willing to put up with you, but always with the asterisk that He can mow you down at any time. A cold war with God is a frightening thing, because you know who the winner and the loser will eventually be.

But you are not apart from the Gospel, so rejoice! The tidings of Advent declare that God's peace and glory go together, and they come to you with the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

The King is Jesus, and He comes with glory and peace. You don't have to wait for Palm Sunday next April to hear about it. Christmas is coming soon, and what do the angels sing on the night of His birth? "*Glory* to God in the highest, and on earth *peace* among those with whom He is pleased!" (Lk. 2:1). The birth of Jesus is about glory and peace! The birth of Jesus brings glory to God in the highest, because the Prince of Peace is born. The Son of God is now in human flesh, and everything He does should reassure mankind about His intentions, His way of establishing peace. His birth is far from imposing – His first bed is a manger, for crying out loud! The beginning of His public life is hardly frightening, because He makes His debut by getting in the water with a bunch of sinners and getting baptized with them; but of all things, His Father declares that by this He is glorified as He proclaims, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased!" The next three years are hardly intimidating: rather than gather troops and flex His all-powerful muscle, He leads a band of disciples around and serves (!) people by teaching and working miracles. All of this leads up to our Gospel lesson, to Palm Sunday, as the crowds shout of glory and peace because the King has come to save.

So He has and does. Five days later, He's crucified. Five days later, He takes all sin and its wages, along with all the hostility and enmity that robs man of peace with God, and He dies with it. He doesn't flatten sinners who want Him dead, but suffers and dies at their hands to save them. Before He dies, in John 12:27-28, Jesus even says that the cross will be His glory; what's more, His Father confirms it with a rare voice from heaven. He dies to bring peace between God and sinners.

Old news to you, I know, but remember what one thinks of God apart from the Gospel: if there is no forgiveness, then God's glory and peace means that He's invincible and ready to establish peace by getting rid of the likes of you. The Gospel is stunning, or it should be: to establish peace with you, the invincible Son of God dies in your place, for your sin, so that there is nothing left to create hostility between you and God.

The story doesn't end there. On the third day, He rises again: that's pretty glorious, yes? And what are the glorious Savior's first words to His disciples in the locked room? "Peace be with you." And what are His next words to His disciples? He sends them out to forgive sins, to give sinners peace with God.

That message endures and continues to this day. In other words, you do not gather here just to hear a story of God's peace and glory once upon a time. By your baptism, the Lord has brought you into the story, the story of His glory and His peace for you. That's what this service is about: why, a few minutes ago we sang the angels' song from Christmas: I sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth;" and then you spent the next couple of minutes praising Him for His glory. And in a few minutes more, you'll be singing the song of the Palm Sunday crowds: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Why? Because the very same Lord who was swaddled in the manger and who rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, who was nailed the cross and rose again, is present here with you, for you. The Word who became flesh is present in His Word and gives you His body and blood in His Supper.

The glorious Son of God, risen and ascended and sitting at His Father's right hand, comes to bring you peace. And because He brings you peace, some day you will stand in glory with Him.

This is a big deal: apart from Christ and His grace, you are not at peace with God. Even with Him and His grace, you may very well not *feel* at peace with God. The devil still goads you with memories of old sins as he tempts you into new ones, and all of that is to get you believing that you're not at peace with God, that the enmity remains and it's only a matter of time until He establishes peace by getting rid of you. The evil one riles your conscience. But then the Lord visits and says, "The devil is a liar, all about strife and chaos instead of peace, and he is anything but glorious. My Word is far more sure than his, and I tell you that you're at peace with God because I've taken all those sins away."

If not your sins, the devil might haunt you with grief. Some of you face this holiday season far from loved ones, and sometimes separated because they have departed this life. But Christ comes here; and with His grace He says, "I remember all those who have died in the faith and now stand in My glory in heaven; and I forgive your sins so that you might join them and Me too."

Glory be to Jesus, for His peace endures with you even in the worst of circumstances. His glory is your peace, and His peace is your glory.

The sin to warn about today is such a common, easy one: do not take His peace and glory for granted. Do not dismiss this worship service as anything less than the risen Christ coming to visit you. Continually examine yourself for your sin; for as you do, you will only hunger for His presence and peace all the more. Run to the Word and run to the Supper, for here is peace with God.

So Advent begins. The word itself means "arrival," and the season proclaims the threefold coming of Jesus. He has come to save, born in Bethlehem to bring peace. He is coming again in glory to deliver you to everlasting life. And in the meantime, He comes to you – not on a donkey, but in, with and under words and water, bread and wine. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: for He comes with glorious grace and peace for you, because you are forgiven for all of your sins.

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