

Behold, He Comes in Power Jeremiah 23:5-8 Advent 1 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today marks the beginning of another year in the Church Year, another season of anticipation, as we look forward to the coming of our King, Jesus Christ, on the Last Day, when He will gather all the faithful (you and me included, by the grace of God), to Himself to spend eternity in heaven. He comes to us today. The very nature of this season is to prepare ourselves for His coming—His final coming—at the end of time. The very word advent means “coming.” Contrary to popular opinion, Advent is not primarily a season to prepare for Jesus’ first coming; that happened 2,000 years ago, when He was born the Babe of Bethlehem. In a few weeks there will be a shift in themes for this season. On the Fourth Sunday in Advent, we will hear in the Gospel Reading the angel proclaiming to Joseph the birth of Jesus. But until then, we keep our attention on the eschaton, the end times, for we are living in the last days, and we will continue to live in the end times until Christ comes again, this time in all His glory and power, as He has promised.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Messiah would come from the Jews, One who would be the righteous Branch of David. This Branch would come in power, for He would come to be their King, a King with the power to reunite Israel and Judah as one nation, a King with the

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power to execute justice and righteousness in the land, a King with the power to forgive sins! The prophet, God's pastor to His people, had good news for them—good news from God about a King who came from God...and who is God Himself: God the Son. Judah will be saved. Israel shall dwell securely. We are forgiven! All this from an all-powerful God and King, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—for you! for me! for the life of the world!

Praise God that He sent His Son to be our King, one with the power to declare us clean, to declare us forgiven, because we desperately need His declaration. That's what forensic justification is all about: it is God declaring us not guilty of our sins, for Jesus' sake. This is a declaration that, out of His undeserved love for us, God needs to make on our behalf time and time again. During the Divine Service we hear multiple times that God forgives us. We hear this multiple times because we sin so much. When we examine ourselves, as we heard earlier, we find nothing in us but sin and death, from which we are incapable of delivering ourselves. We daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. As sinners, we walk in darkness and make provisions for the flesh, to gratify its desires. We are powerless in our struggle against sin, especially when left to our own devices. Here we come to the penitential nature of Advent. Here we come to why we followed the service of Corporate Confession and Absolution this

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morning, to reflect on our need for the Lord our Righteousness to come into the world, to come with power as our King. You see, this King has power to pronounce sentence upon us, to sentence us to eternity in hell, to be forever condemned and in torment by the devil.

Jesus, as our King and Judge, has power to pronounce sentence upon us. He also has the power to acquit us. He has the power to call you by name and promise you that your sins are forgiven. This is the power Jesus prefers to exercise. He offers you His forgiveness because He won your forgiveness when He died on the cross. That's why He came into the world, to save you, me, and the whole world, from our sins. The name Jesus means "YHWH saves." Christ our King came into this world to win the battle for us over sin, death, and the power of the devil, at the cost of His very life. Yes, the King died. Christ our King willfully set aside His power and glory to be born true man, like you and me, and to allow Himself to be crucified. As King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus could have called upon the angels to come down from heaven to fight for His freedom, but He chose to remain captive to our sins—Christ, the King and the Holy One of God! And this King, who has the power to banish us all to hell, went through hell of us while He hung on the cross, separated from His Father, and ours, on that truly Good Friday—the one "Black Friday" that guarantees us eternal savings. And on the third day, the King lives! Long live the King!

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Behold, He comes with power, but hidden in human form as He rode into Jerusalem, not in a limousine or a Popemobile, but on a donkey. Behold, your King comes to you today, righteous and having salvation, coming to you today in His Word and in His body and blood, coming with power to forgive your sins, my sins, and the sins of the whole world, which we will sing about Him in a few moments in the Agnus Dei: "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us...grant us Thy peace." Behold, your King, your Lord, and your Savior has the power to forgive your sins because He defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil by His death and resurrection. You hear His forgiveness with your ears. You taste His forgiveness upon your lips. And, by His Holy Spirit, you look forward to His final coming. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.