

Matthew 24:36–44
Second Advent -- Now
Advent 1

December 1, 2019
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction]

Thanksgiving is over, and the world quickly moves on to Christmas.

As if —it wasn't already focused on Christmas anyway.

BUT It is Advent, and Advent marks the time where
we prepare for the Coming of the Kingdom of God.

Today's Gospel is preparing us for the day when our Lord will return,
will judge the living and the dead.

Today's Gospel shows us that the world
seems to be going on in a completely normal fashion
for both Christians and unbelievers.

Everything seems the same;
there is eating and drinking, marriage ceremonies,
men and women at work,
and there seems to be no difference,
until suddenly
there is a separation on the day of judgment.

But there was a difference.

Some were watching and preparing for the kingdom of God; others were not.
This is Advent
watching and waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

[Kingdom of God]

So we ask ourselves... How do we recognize God's kingdom?

And the perfect confirmation answer: The kingdom of God comes in three ways.

First, God's kingdom comes to through the birth of the Bethlehem babe.

The first advent was when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

We can celebrate that, but it is in the past.

We can't experience it or prepare for it.

Third, on the Last Day, God's kingdom will come with power, for judgment.

This is the apocalypse. This is eschatological theology.

It's all about end times.

These are two of the three "advents" that we think about during this season.

First and third are what we think of most – birth of Christ and the returning of Christ.

The **Second** advent or coming of Christ is happening to us now.

NOW, when we hear God's Word, repent, and receive his grace.

So it's good to remember what our catechism teaches
about the coming of God's kingdom.

It asks: *"How does God's kingdom come?*

*God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit,
so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and
lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity"* (SC, 2nd Petition).

In other words,

God's kingdom of grace is not perceived with the eyes; you can't see it.

God's kingdom is not recognized by the eyes, but by the ears.

In this world, we live in and recognize God's kingdom by faith.

By faith, we see that what the world offers to us is darkness.

Everything the world values

—drinking parties, sensuality, gratifying the desires of the flesh—
is called by St. Paul in our Epistle today
"the works of darkness":

He says:

"So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy" (Rom 13:12–13).

The opposite, God's Word tells us, is love.

"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (13:10).

How has your life been characterized?

Have you given yourself over to the works of darkness

—"orgies and drunkenness, . . . sexual immorality, . . . quarreling and jealousy"?

Has your life demonstrated the love that puts your neighbor ahead of yourself?

Has your life demonstrated hospitality?

Behold, here is the mystery of Advent:

Jesus comes to love you, precisely you

who have not loved,

who have not obeyed the Commandments,

who up to this point have made ***"provision for the flesh,
to gratify its desires"*** (13:14).

It is precisely there—in Christ's love, mercy, and forgiveness—

that the kingdom of God is recognized.

[***Which Advent***]

Is that the kingdom you're praying for this Advent?
Which Advent are you thinking about this year?
Of what would your perfect kingdom consist?

Our natural, sinful selves desire
wealth and riches and prestige and power and comfort and
whatever else brings pleasure to the self.
Twisted by self-absorption, self-love,
our ideas of the kingdom are perverted and corrupt.

Still for us sinners the Lord calls us to a kingdom of love and mercy.

When Jesus calls himself the Son of Man who comes in judgment (3rd Advent),
this is the same Son of Man Jesus talks about earlier in Matthew's Gospel,
***"The Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will
condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and
flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day"*** (Mt 20:18–19).

In his cross, Jesus takes our own curse upon himself,
the curse of death and removal from God's kingdom, and he buries it.

We who take sin lightly imagine that it can be dismissed lightly.
But our iniquities must be paid for—must.

Elsewhere Jesus uses this strong word *must*.
***"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and
chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"*** (Lk 9:22).

This *must* happen,
the Son of Man *must* suffer and die,
must come under the Father's punishment,
if we are to be restored to God's kingdom.

For those who reject and despise God's kingdom and his mercy (2nd Advent),
judgment (3rd Advent) comes suddenly.

Our Lord gives an example in the great flood.
In the days of Noah, the unrighteous were not prepared,
but preoccupied with the things of this world. Are you?

“As were the days of Noah,” Jesus says in our text from Matthew, “so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Mt 24:37–39).

In an instant, everything they held so dear was swept away,
and there was no time for preparation,
 no time for repentance,
 no time for anything.

We know not when our last hour comes.

The same will be true in the Day of Judgment: ***“Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (vv 40–42).***

The activities Jesus mentions represent all our cares and pursuits:

eating and drinking stands for the pleasures of life;
marriage stands for our relationships with others; and
buying, selling, planting, and building indicate our possessions.

Pleasures, people, and possessions, given to us by God,
can end up driving us away from God.

Thus we must beware so that these do not distract us from God’s kingdom,
but instead serve to prepare us for the Lord’s coming.

[Conclusion]

In his first advent, Jesus came as the tiny babe of Bethlehem.

We will hear plenty about this past certainty this Christmas.

In his third advent, Jesus will come in judgement.

The church and the world – Think of all the doomsday warnings
are always ready to warn of Jesus’ third advent.

But this year, this Advent Season, let us remember that Jesus comes now.

His Advent is in this service – the absolution, the Word, the Lord’s Supper.
Christ’s second Advent is now. Amen!

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)
