

Notes for Next Sunday
First Sunday in Advent

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Isaiah 2:1-5). The theme of the “mountain of the LORD” (Mount Zion) is common in Isaiah; it occurs in passages that depict the coming of both Jews and Gentiles to Jerusalem (Zion) in the last days. The peace described in this passage has been inaugurated through the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, and will be consummated at the return of Christ. In verse 5 Isaiah calls his people to escape the coming judgment by walking in the light of the Word which is preached to them.

Epistle (Romans 13:11-14). In this section, as in other NT passages, the certain coming of the end of the present age is used to provide motivation for godly living. For Christians of every generation, “the present time” is no time for spiritual slumber. In fact, the window of opportunity to lead a life of love and service to God and our neighbor becomes smaller with each passing day.

Gospel (Matthew 21:1-11). When Jesus was 12 years old, he went up to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. This was something pious Jews did every year (Luke 2:41-42). So we can assume that Jesus made many trips to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. But this time was different. Jesus was very much aware that he was going up Jerusalem to die. During this Advent season we need to be aware that Christ's second coming is right around the corner.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ²In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house 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. ⁴He 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. ⁵Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

2:2 the last days. † Can refer to the future generally, but usually it has in view the Messianic era. In a real sense the last days began with the first coming of Christ and will be fulfilled at his second coming. (CSB)

2:2 mountain of the Lord's temple. Not a physical reshaping of the earth or the formation of a political world empire, but a figurative description of what God will accomplish through the Messiah. The Jerusalem that God promises to create is His Church made of people from all nations. (TLSB)

2:3 many peoples will come. Many nations will turn to the church of God. And those who have already come and been converted will lure others to go with them and seek out the house of the God of Jacob. A mark of true repentance is this: holy zeal for God and His kingdom, then to strive and be actively engaged in winning others. (Stoeckhardt)

2:3 and he will teach. God's people long to learn the ways of God, and He teaches them. God gave people His Word and teaches them through the written record of His love in the Scriptures. Luther reminds us, “Christianity is most truly a hearing or pondering of the Word in order that Christ may speak to us at all time” (LW, Volume 16, page 31). (PBC)

2:4 Settle disputes. The peace that fills our hearts changes our lives, and as we change, we also change the society around us. As the Scriptures declare, that change will not be complete here on earth. (LL)

2:4 swords into plowshares. The reverse process occurs in Joel 3:10. What is here called a plowshare was actually an iron point mounted on a wooden beam. Ancient plows did not have a plowshare proper. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

13:11 present time. The time of salvation, the closing period of the present age, before the consummation of the kingdom. (CSB)

13:11 wake up from your slumber. The word “slumber” is figurative for “delay, carelessness and indifference.” It is a picture of someone who is too lazy to be ready and just wants to hit the snooze button. A Christian life is not like that. It is one of eager anticipation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

13:12 The night. The present evil age. (CSB)

13:13 behave decently. Only decent behavior is appropriate in the light of day. Any other lifestyle undermines the Christian witness and threatens to cancel our confession of faith. (LL)

13:14 clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. This process began in our baptism where sometimes the child is dressed a white baptism gown. By renewing our baptism we daily put on this white dress of Christ’s righteousness. – Being clothed with Christ means, first and foremost, accepting by faith the righteousness Christ has earned for us. (PBC)

GOSPEL – Matthew 21:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

21:1 Bethphage. The name means “house of figs.” It is not mentioned in the OT, and in the NT only in connection with the Triumphal Entry. (CSB)

21:2 donkey. An animal symbolic of humility, peace and Davidic royalty. (CSB)

21:2 with her colt. This meant that the colt had not been ridden on to this point. Jesus directs his disciples to bring both animals, even though he would ride on only one. The mother was taken in order to make the foal willing to go. Luke tells us that this colt had never ridden on. For sacred purposes, animals must always be selected which had never been used. Jesus would also be laid away in an unused grave. (Ylvisaker)

21:4 what was spoken through the prophet. The prophecies of the OT concerning the Messiah, were all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, thus proving with absolute certainty that he was the Christ. (Concordia Bible with notes)

21:5 daughter of Zion. This refers to the inhabitants of Zion, not the citizens of Jerusalem in general, but according to the view of the prophets and the evangelists themselves, the believer, the Church which yearns for redemption. (Ylvisaker)

21:8 very large crowd. Jesus' raising of Lazarus had caused quite a stir and brought him a great deal of acclaim. This had also attracted attention in Jerusalem and many came out from there to meet the procession.

21:9 Hosanna. We sing the same song each time we pray that Communion liturgy. The familiar words of the Sanctus remind us that the same Jesus who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey comes to us in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. (PBC)