

***“We Must Cry Out”*** (Luke 19:40)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our coming Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Advent greetings to you dear Christians. We commence our season of preparing for the coming of Jesus. As the rest of the world draws you to jump directly into Christmas of the commercial type and hype, we say Christmas is not here yet. Instead, we prepare in the beautiful penitential season of Advent. We speak of how to prepare for the King so that when He comes we are not choking on the stuff of the world, but have a faith that is prepared and properly waiting.

When Jesus approaches, God approaches. What is that like? It is momentous. It is full of power. Imagine what it is like when certain mere mortals approach. What is it like when a president comes to town? Roads close, traffic is redirected. Whole cities are impacted. What if someone famous comes walking towards a crowd? People converge, they want to see. My family was in Manhattan to sight see when we had gone out for my eldest son's graduation from college in New Haven, CT. We woke up that morning to “Good Morning America” staged in Times Square only this time Times Square was directly below us, about 30 floors below. My teenaged daughter at the time – Danielle – got pretty excited for an Olympic skater who was down there. She couldn't get dressed fast enough to run down to see the heart-throb. In the army, all of the chaplain candidates were gathered in an auditorium, when the Major General came walking down the aisle, we all stood up and collectively saluted him. He couldn't “just walk by,” his presence demanded a response.

In a movie called “Evan Almighty,” the actor temporarily gets the power of God. He's in a car and he decides to conduct a modern-day parting of the Red Sea, but this time he parts the traffic...all of the cars move out of the way to clear his path so that he can zoom down the street in his fancy ride. The scene is silly in this comedy, but what is not lost is that the presence of someone special impacts the environment. It's inevitable.

I inject this concept into my pre-marital and marital pastoral counseling. The one to whom you are joined to in marriage, should receive the highest honor of any person in your life. That person has top ranking. They complete you, they are your complement from God. No one under God is more important, so act like it. The sinful flesh of course fights against this high call. But your spouse is a gift from heaven, so we “make way” when they walk into the room. We become attentive, we refuse to take them for granted, we strive to show how precious they are to us. We should train ourselves to greet each other with hugs and kisses, and with “I love you's.” Compared to anyone else who might walk by you: a celebrity, a sports star, a politician, a decorated military hero, etc., these pale in comparison to your spouse walking into the room. The couple that honors one another will properly care for their marriage.

Again, the point is that when someone special walks by, something happens. You can't be silent. You shouldn't be or in some cases, you should be...you might be so silent that you bow down and hit your knees to the ground (this is the instinctive and understandable response when a person finds themselves in the presence of one of the holy angels, though when this happened to the apostle John, the angel was quick to correct his response, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." (Revelation 22:9)

But again, if you find yourself in the presence of someone very special, something's gotta give. Something must happen. Again, it's inevitable. And no one impacts us so much as when God comes. When our Creator and Savior comes, we can't do nothing. Something must happen. Something happens now when He comes. Something will happen when He comes again in glory.

We have a snap shot of this very thing having actually occurred. Here's what is recorded in Exodus chapter 33:

"Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.' And [the Lord] said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name "The Lord." And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.' And the Lord said, 'Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.'" (vss 18-23)

The day is coming when all people will be inevitably impacted when the Lord comes again in glory:

***Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)***

We shall be in His presence and we shall bow and we shall confess. There's no negotiation here. This must happen. This will happen.

In our gospel at Luke 19, the Pharisees in the crowd, however, were offended by those crying out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (v 38) As a result they demanded that Jesus would instruct them to stop. (v 39) To this Jesus our Lord replied: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." (v 40) One expositor says, "If men should be silent, a stupendous miracle would have to take

place, and the very stones about them would have to testify.” (Buls quoting Arndt, *Exegetical Notes: Gospel Texts, Series C*, 3)

And yet this is what the Pharisees wanted, that is, they wanted the people to be silent. They wanted to be silent and in their own way, they were silent...this is a terrible inconsistency, it is against the order of things, it is evil, it is wicked...and it depicts the sinful heart. God comes to us constantly through His Word and Spirit. He is always coming to all through the ministry of His Church and when He comes His desire is to always create faith by the Holy Spirit working through the Word of Christ and the Holy Sacraments, but when these are resisted and rejected, it is beyond sad. And yet this is what the flesh does.

We confess in our Small Catechism that when the Lord teaches us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” that this means that “The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.” The catechism goes on to ask, “How does God’s kingdom come?” Answer: “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.” That is, when He comes already through His Word, His presence is definitely impacting us: we pray that His kingdom comes to us and fills us; we pray for the Holy Spirit so that by grace we have a living faith and lead godly lives. Talk about an impact. Talk about responding to the Lord who comes even now!

But the nightmarish reality that is as nothing to the world today is that one would have no reaction to the Lord’s coming; that His presence would have no effect. That people would ignore Him and consider Him as irrelevant or insignificant, and what is worse, would tell others to stop worshipping Him. To live in such a way that the Lord’s presence has no impact is horrifying. It is the height of irony that one would stare and be transfixed towards a celebrity who will turn to dust, but completely be unaffected by the One who is the eternal God who will judge all men.

This is why we must properly view these words of Christ, they are words of judgment. They are intended to wake us up so that we are not caught sleeping in our sin when He comes again in glory. Lenski explained: “Jesus speaks prophetically of a time when ‘these’ [in the crowd mixed with true disciples] shall, indeed, cease their acclaim, and when the lifeless stones shall, indeed, ‘yell’ with piercing shrieks when not one stone is left upon another in Jerusalem itself. That yelling will be the voice of judgment for rejecting the Messiah-King. By wanting the disciples to be silent these Pharisees were asking that this yelling of the stones begin now.” (Interpretation of Luke, 966)

This commentary struggles with the crowd. The fact is that they represent the range of people which persists to this day: the text says at verse 37 “the whole multitude of his disciples,” – there were genuine believers even if some of them were shouting for the wrong reasons if their shouting was for the miracle-worker Jesus and not the humble Savior who was

going to give His life as a ransom for many, others were surely just observers, they were curious, and then finally, there were those against Him like the Pharisees, but reactions were abounding and varied. They still are.

Some will cry out with joy and thanksgiving; calling out for mercy; calling out in faith; but others cry out to silence the gospel; to reject the Savior, to make others compliant to their idea of political correctness (which term now is no longer politically correct since all views are to be honored and none of them put down including political correctness...except for the Christian faith that is, this is the one view that will continue to be outwardly attacked, and this is everywhere approved). Again, Jesus keeps raising a response...hotness or coldness, even while some imagine that lukewarm-ness is a safe-zone (it isn't).

But in Jesus' words of warning about the stones also strikes another imagery: from John the Baptist we learn that "stones" are a metaphor for Gentiles. The Pharisees were among His own people rejecting Him, but in time God would raise up Gentiles to "gladly accept the mission of announcing his presence." (Just, *Concordia Commentary*, 748) One way or another, proper worshippers of the Christ would come, the Word and the Spirit always create faith. God always retains a remnant of true believers.

So what about us? Who do you say Jesus is? How do you respond to His presence? In the book of Acts when St. Paul proclaimed there were three reactions: 1) Some scoffed and rejected the gospel; 2) others scratched their heads and said, "I want to hear more;" and 3) and yet still others believed and followed. (Acts 17:32f.)

What about us? We must surely recognize this One who comes and must surely have the right response. This One who comes is the "Blessed One," He is the Lord; this One who comes brings peace. He comes through His life-blood to establish peace between us and God. He covers our sins so that we can stand before God, so that we would know true joy since we are not condemned and since life is not something that ends for you, but rather something that flows and abounds forever, real life, true life. We therefore are very much impacted by His coming. We are full of joy, and full of hope; we are full of the knowledge that we are right with God through this One who comes and our response is inevitable: we must cry out. We too say, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" We are the stones who out-cry the Pharisees. We are the poor sinners and beggars delivered from the shackles of sin and death. We must respond, we must react, we can't just sit back and do nothing. Jesus is coming, the Life of the World has entered our lives. We are now the people of God, full of His light, full of His love and mercy.

He comes again Christian in the Holy Sacrament. We must therefore cry out again. We cry out "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us!"...We see Him come and then we cry out as He passes by, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in

peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.” We keep crying out. We can’t help it! And all of this crying out will keep you awake, it will keep you watching, so that when He comes again in glory, you’ll be ready Christian. You will be ready to greet Him as one of the stones raised from death to life. Cry out, never stop crying out: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” “He has saved me; He is saving me; He will save me! He is Jesus. I am one of His stones, and nothing will keep me from crying out to Him for by His grace, I now cry out.” This is what you do Christian. This is what you are! A saved one who cries out to Jesus! Thanks be to God!