

# "The LORD Comes to His Temple"

Sermon #9

## "The Advent of Grace and Truth"

John 1:14-18

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

Immersed in a world where other gods are invoked and worshiped, the children of Jehovah often fall to the temptations of the evil one with laity calling on clergy to bring on the gods and spineless shepherds accommodating such calls of the people. In the darkness of sin the orgies take place both individually in the tents of the chosen, as well as corporately in the congregated camp. For where one finds spiritual idolatry there quickly follows physical adultery. So what do these false shepherds and bleating people deserve? What does such a convocation merit? Surely the visitation of God's justice and the venting of His wrath. Did this happen? Yes, most certainly, for the Bible tells us of the consequences of such manifest sin and "when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned" (Exodus 33:4).

Still, there was the other Word of the LORD God; the one about the Promised Seed of the woman; the Savior of the world Who would be born. As the world sat in the darkness of death and decay, and as the Church was attacked by scimitar-smiling foes outside the camp and worse, by split-tongued traitors from within her walls, the promise of God's mercy, grace and peace remained the Bride's hope throughout the years. Just as "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19), so also has the Church - that is, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God" (Large Catechism) - keeps all things whatsoever her faithful shepherds have said to her and to her children - that is, to the Church and the Christians therein.

In the fulness of time, two shepherds came down from above, from on high. The first one, Moses, admonished the people, preaching the Law in all of its sternness and fierceness. He bore the Ten Commandments down from above to man below. Moses also proclaimed the Good News to the penitent - the Gospel of the other shepherd - the Good Shepherd Who would come down from on high and bear the burden of the world's sin. The Holy Spirit moved Moses to write the promise this way to the people of the congregation, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brethren - Him you shall heed" (Deuteronomy 18:15). This promise was of the Son of God being incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and given the name, Jesus, by Joseph the carpenter on the eighth day. This is the 12-year-old Temple of ancient days coming to the temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. This is Jesus the Christ Who not only speaks the Truth of the Law, but Whose Word and Work bespeak the grace of God.

Dearly beloved, this is the final sermon in the sermon series titled "The LORD Comes to His

Temple," a series that began in the first week of Advent just over a month ago. Please listen to John 1:14-18 as we ponder ...

... "The Advent of Grace and Truth" ...

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to Him and cried, 'This was He of Whom I said, "He Who comes after me ranks before me, for He was before me.") And from His fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known. "

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The Judean journey along the way is a lengthy one. It took the Church, and it is taking the Church, a long time to arrive. The road began with the nomadic travels of Adam and Eve after the Fall into sin and following their merciful expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Clad in their God-given skins, whose blood was shed to cover their shame, our oldest parents scratched out a living in the dust of the earth. Likely they lived in tents and lean-to shelters. But however they dwelt, it is true that wherever they went God was with them. This tiny church built an altar here and there, gathering together and calling on the Name of the LORD, just as the congregation of the faithful has done for centuries and as we do here today.

The Glory of the LORD dwelt among the people in the Tent of Meeting outside the camp and then passed over to the newly-completed Tabernacle and then, once in the promised land, settled above the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. These Old Testament abodes served "as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" (Hebrews 8:5). and pointed to the perfect Temple the One "not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (Hebrews 9:11). Thus, "the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, first in the womb of the virgin in Galilee and then to the house of Zachariah accompanied by Mary when she went to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth who was also with child.

During the days Christmas, we heard the angels' glorias and the shepherds' words of the Savior born in Bethlehem, wrapped in His royal robes of swaddling clothes, and making a temporary temple from a manger. We journeyed to Jerusalem's temple to behold the Infant Redeemer in the arms of Simeon and followed, via the Word twelve years later, the Temple in the temple asking questions and giving answers.

Oh how we needed the Savior Jesus ... the Word made flesh and dwelling among us. We had the Word that Moses brought down and the Law written by the finger of God upon the weighty tablets of rock, and inscribed on the stoney hearts of man. Those "thou shalt"s and "thou shalt not"s is the Divine Word and it is good and right for it is from God. It is His will and this Law only and always accuses the old adam, that is, the old sinful nature that we were born with. It crushes and leads to despair and ends in destruction. And if this be the only Word from the LORD, then all is lost and each is lost. If this is the sum of God's message, then the Church has no proclamation to make that speaks of peace with God and hope for salvation and eternal life with Him in Paradise.

But dearly beloved, "Fear not; for behold, I bring you Good News of a great joy which will come to

all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). In other words, in addition to the fact that "the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Here is the Incarnate Son of God Who has come to bear the burden of the world's transgressions and to fulfill His Law in our place. Indeed, "John bore witness to Him and cried, 'This was He of Whom I said, "He Who comes after me ranks before me, for He was before me.'" He is, as John the Baptizer pointed out, "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This Jesus did when He suffered for the sins of all and gave His Life for the world. "He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own Blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:12-14).

In other words, "the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." And even though God the Son died He rose again as He had said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The Temple Jesus spoke of was His Body and the time was Easter morning. But there is even more for the Bible states that "from His fulness have we all received, grace upon grace." Grace upon grace? Yes, grace upon grace - the Benediction upon the Invocation - the Lord's Supper upon the Absolution of Christ - the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood upon being in the Presence of the Lord - the peace of the Lord upon the Creed of the Gospel - the grace of God upon the grace of God for you.

All of this ... all of history ... was to preserve a people from whom the Messiah would come in order to be the Savior of the world and that means your Savior ... to bring you to the gracious water of Holy Baptism, to escort you into His Church, and to keep you steadfast in the Word that you might remain "faithful unto death and be given the crown of Life" (Revelation 2:10). Indeed, for the one who conquers, Jesus has promised that He "will make him a pillar in the Temple of My God; never shall he go out of it" (Revelation 3:12).

Thus John beholds the faithful in Revelation who have come out of the great tribulation; who have "they washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night within His Temple; and He Who sits upon the Throne will shelter them (will 'tent upon them') with His Presence" (Rev. 7:14-15).

John continued to describe "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:2-4). ... "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the City has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the Glory of the LORD is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22).

We may summarize this sermon on the Advent of Grace and Truth, and indeed the entire sermon series on the Lord coming to His Temple, and truly your life in Christ Jesus with the following "therefore" ...

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the Sanctuary by the Blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:19-25). Amen.