**Luke 19:28-40 November 28, 2021**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 19 here re-reading these words. ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.’” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Collect of the Day for this the First Sunday in Advent says, “Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance.” Stir up Your power. That’s certainly a theme of the New Year, a stirring up, a starting up, a reinvigoration. New Year’s Resolutions bring motivation and the feeling that this time, we’re actually gonna do something. Lose weight, save money, make changes, this is it, this is our chance, now is the time. So it is here in the Church. Advent has begun, the colors have changed, the wreath is out, perhaps you’ve even put up lights, decorations, or your Christmas tree at home. The hot coals of the former Church Year sit in the fireplace, and it’s time to stir them up. Now is not the time for winding down, now is the time for stirring up. The crowds in our Gospel lesson from Luke chapter 19, the events of Palm Sunday are very stirred up. Of course there is the laying down of palm branches and the cloaks on the road that we always think about on this particular event, but we don’t find that here in Luke 19, not in this particular section. This is the crowd reacting to the coming of Jesus Christ in what they are doing and saying, in such a fervor and being so stirred up that the Pharisees can’t shut them down. These men are so desperate they even ask Jesus to douse the enthusiasm of this crowd, to rebuke them, to get them in line, to silence them, but His response is that their excitement is such that anything would join them. “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

This is the fervor of a new movement, of an excitement that can’t be contained. It’s like the adrenaline someone feels after a pep talk or pep rally. It’s the motivation an athlete feels after being motivated by a coach or fellow teammate, or in some ways….anything. I remember a time in 8th grade playing basketball where the cheerleaders in whatever cheer they did mentioned me by name. I was so stirred up I probably could have jumped up and dunked the ball if I tried to. I’m talking about a time when your excitement urges you to action and you’re swept up in the excitement of what is happening or is going to happen soon. The type of excitement that would motivate someone to sit outside of a store during Black Friday in the cold for hours and hours just to get something. The type of excitement that would bring someone to a stadium to sit in freezing temperatures just to support their team because they may actually win. This is the stirring up that we are talking about on this, the First Sunday of preparation for our hearts for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ our King, born as a baby in Bethlehem, the entire reason we observe or decorate or celebrate this season at this time of year at all.

But excitement doesn’t last forever. Look at the crowds. One minute nothing would deter them, they are shouting and excited calling out for Peace in heaven and Glory in the highest, echoing the words of the angels who announced the birth of Christ, and the next, a few short days later, stirred up in hate over Jesus not doing what they wanted him to in overthrowing the Roman government, and stirred up in violent rage to see him crucified. They were apathetic to his rescue, they wanted to see him die. New Year’s resolutions begin with such motivation, a renewed energy stirred up at the start of a New Year with new possibilities. Most New Year’s resolutions don’t make it past a week, let alone a month. By Valentine’s Day you’re back to old habits, and that’s being generous, you’re apathetic about the changes you had hoped to make and would rather no one brings it up. I felt like I could do anything on the court or on the field when I competed as an athlete when things went well, when the cheerleaders are calling out your name and cheering you on you can do anything, but when you’re playing football and losing by 42 points you don’t feel as stirred up, especially when you haven’t won a game all season. Suddenly you don’t feel so stirred up and motivated. You waited all that time to get the item you wanted in the cold only to have it break or it’s not as great as you thought. You cheered and cheered for your team only to see them lose. You aren’t stirred up, you’re shut down. The energy and motivation is gone. It’s just the same old, same old.

That’s our temptation, especially after these past few years and what we’ve been told to do in order to stay safe. We haven’t been stirred up to go out and do, we’ve been hindered and restricted and told to stay at home. It can affect us in many ways. It affects our relationships, it affects our overall health, and it also affects our faith. Even Advent can be seen as just another time of the Church Year, nothing special. Sure we have a few more services, there’s a few more decorations, but basically everything is the same. No need for stirring up, no need for motivation, no need to do or change anything. We tend in the Winter to slow down anyway, the days are shorter, the roads are treacherous, there’s deer and other hazards that can hurt us. No Pastor, now is not the time for stirring up, now is the time for winding down. Now is the time for hibernation. And we couldn’t be more wrong.

Something big is happening, something huge, something that demands attention. Christmas is coming. The birth of a Savior, the promised Lord, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Who is born to die to save us, the one who truly was blessed and the king that they were crying for here as he enters Jerusalem so many years after he came as a baby in a manger. The one who did bring peace in heaven and glory in the highest because he brought reconciliation to us sinners and made our hearts blameless in holiness before God our Father as it says in our Epistle lesson, the one who in our Old Testament lesson is called “our righteousness” or the one who makes us right in the eyes of God or perfect through His perfection. This is big. This is so big we can’t be apathetic to it happening, but we must be prepared. So now isn’t the time for hibernation, now isn’t the time for winding and shutting down. Now is the time to be prepared by God’s Word and Sacraments. To come into God’s house more often than normal in order to hear about all that this wonderful Savior did for our salvation. Now isn’t a time for less, it’s a time for more.

It’s a time for singing, it’s a time for lights, it’s a time for reflection and preparation not only of homes and worship spaces, but also our hearts. It may seem strange to begin Advent with the events of Palm Sunday, but Christ’s entrance to Jerusalem speaks of where our focus needs to be even in this joyous season. Christ comes to die for us and he comes in humility, as a servant, riding on a donkey in lowly pomp as the hymn states. Christ comes as an example of our own humility, where this season is more about others than ourselves and how we can be a servant to others and put their needs before our own. It’s a season of giving, it’s a time of family, it’s a moment of reflection on the needs of others rather than ourselves. If you come here this morning and feel the Holy Spirit and hear of the love of Jesus Christ for you, if you come and receive the very body and blood of Jesus Christ given here from God’s altar to your mouth, the faith that God has given you strengthened then you’ve been stirred up to face the challenges of this season and of the world around you. Then you’ve been stirred up and focused on what really matters as you’ll be barraged by temptations to either go in the wrong direction, or sit down and sit it all out in apathetic fatigue.

But there are those who aren’t stirred up, and as we look forward to Christmas Eve when we take the light of a single candle and spread it all around our sanctuary before we sing of the night of our dear Savior’s birth, we must in the same way reach out to those whose candles have been unlit for a long time. We must recognize the needs of others in humility and how to be used by the Holy Spirit to stir them up to action in this most important season of the Church Year. In Bible Study as we’ve gone through the “Everyone His Witness” Evangelism program we learned last week about the three different type of people and how they connect and relate to others. They are called “Head, Heart, and Hands” people. A head person is focused on philosophical discussions or morality or deeper concepts, being intellectually challenged or being able to talk through deep topics. A heart person cares about interpersonal relationships and connecting with other people on a personal level, sitting down and really getting to know someone and what they like and who they are. A hands person doesn’t want to just sit and talk, they want to do, they want to be involved in something that is happening and practically make something or do something. This is an important part of our own lives as Christians and how we relate to other people. We have to focus on where they are at in their lives and what will stir them up and help them see the importance of Advent and of the Word of God in their lives. We have to see how the Holy Spirit will use us in their life which means we have to listen to them and ask questions of them in order to listen to them even more. It’s not the same for every person. If you throw water on a fire it will douse it out, but if you throw water on a grease fire it will stir it up! So in the same way we have to know our neighbor in order to speak to them, we have to recognize what will motivate them and what their needs are because God has called us into their lives to be a witness to them and to help them be prepared for the coming King of Christmas.

We observe the King’s arrival on Christmas Day, the baby Jesus born in Bethlehem, but he will come again, and we must be ready. See the lights and think of His light, coming into our world of darkness. Prepare the gifts for others and see Christ as the gift given to you to save you from sin and make you right with God. Hear the carols and listen to the words that speak about more than snow and a wonderful season, but talk about the peace that can come only from our Savior. Now is the time to be stirred up to action for your own hearts and your neighbors. Rejoice, be glad, be prepared, Christ is coming.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.