

Mark 11:1-10

November 29, 2020

That really should have been a very difficult ride into Jerusalem. Even downright impossible. You do not just get on a colt, on which no one has ever sat, and expect to have an easy and pleasant journey. You will upset the colt, get hurt in the process, and just simply not make it very far at all.

Yet nothing of the kind takes place. His two disciples untie the colt, bring it to Jesus, and on the colt Jesus rides. And nothing at all is mentioned of the colt bucking and being upset, of Jesus falling off, or of Him not finishing His journey into Jerusalem. This is all done for us; for our comfort and for our assurance, as we are about to ride into the new year on which no one has ever sat.

New year? Yes, the new Church Year which begins today, the First Sunday in Advent. This means that the old year is over and done. Yay! Right? For what a year it was. No explanation is necessary. Later today break out the champagne and have a toast to the old year being laid to rest, never to rise again.

The new year has to be better, doesn't it? At least we hope it will be better than the last one. But such hope is unfounded. There is no promise from God that this new Church Year will be any better than the one we just brought to a close. In fact, we may want to hold off on the champagne because Scripture teaches us that as this world approaches its end, things will go from bad to worse.

Oh my. Perhaps the pandemic will end. But what will follow? It might be, as Jesus tells it, when a demon leaves someone, it returns to the house from where it came, swept and put in order, and then it goes and brings seven other demons more evil than itself and they enter and dwell there. What can be more evil than the present pandemic? Whatever it is, we may find out as we journey through the year that lies ahead of us, the colt upon which no one has ever sat.

How comforting, therefore, to see in our text Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the colt. He has no fear of it. He steadies it. He masters it. He uses it to bring Him to where He wants to go. This is how we can enter the year that stretches out before us. It is untried, untested. It could certainly bring much pain and sorrow to anyone who attempts to ride it. And there is no guarantee that it will carry us through. It could buck us off at any time. This new Church Year is exactly like the colt on which no one had ever sat. But as Jesus sits on the colt, so He sits, with all authority, upon this new year. And we are assured that our journey, no matter how uneasy or unpleasant, will be greatly blessed nonetheless.

This is true, yet not simply because Jesus rides on the colt, but because of where the colt takes Him. It takes Him to Jerusalem, but even beyond to a hill just outside the city where a cross is waiting there for Him.

What is waiting for you in this new year? Joy or grief? Sickness or good health? Financial gains or woes? Perhaps the colt will buck you off at some point and you will not even make it through the year. But does it matter? You and I have not ridden on this colt, but Jesus did. This new year

belongs to Him, therefore. It will have no surprises of which Jesus is unaware. If it holds sickness or grief for you, it is not too much for Jesus to handle for you and with you.

A year ago, on the First Sunday in Advent, none of us could have even imagined what a year it would be. That colt certainly proved to be a bucking bronco. But was there ever a time during this last Church Year when God turned His face away from you in anger? When He proved to be less than merciful toward you? Even during all the isolation, He never forsook you. Your baptism never left you. God kept His words of life coming to you, sometimes through the internet.

Jesus could not say the same thing, however. For the colt took Him to the cross where He would be forsaken by God. Where not just seven, but all the evil spirits would torment Him up until He died.

Jesus endured this for you because, you see, you and I really are the ones who deserve to be forsaken by God. How many times during this last year did we turn away from Him? How many times did we forsake His Commandments? And His words of life, how many times did we despise them neglecting His kind invitation to hear them read and explained to us?

But this is why Jesus got on the colt to ride to the cross. He took it all. Your sinfulness. Your turning away from God. Every shameful thing that you and I did this past year, and all the years before that, Jesus made it all His own. And so God punished Him in your place. And you, my friend, He forgives. Each and every one of you is forgiven.

Today is not the beginning of the secular calendar year in which we remember the gods and goddesses of the Romans, such as Janus – January, Mars – March, Aphrodite – April, and so on. Today begins the Church Year in which Jesus Christ is the focal point. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost... This Church Year revolves around your Lord and what He did for you, and still does. This year will be a year of grace no matter what the colt decides to do with you. For on this colt Jesus sits. Have no fear, therefore. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. On this new year Jesus rides. He rides with you, for you, and to you. Amen.