

Savior of the Nations, Come!

Dear watching, waiting, wondering Advent People,

Do you like the season of Advent? It's exciting, isn't it – the preparing, the planning, the suspense? From Thanksgiving on, there's just one thing going on after another. You have your parties to invite for, your schedules to coordinate, your gifts to purchase. You have to get your house ready to welcome guests, and don't forget about the decorations or the set up for the parties and the traditions. And it's all so exciting because you know what's coming. Then, you come to church and you see the Advent wreath and you know the countdown to Christmas is on its way. The Christmas Parade and the Ladies Christmas Party are this weekend, Christmas 4 Kids the next. There's the soup supper this Wednesday and those special Advent opportunities for worship midweek – and then you add all of your work and friend celebrations there. As we prepare for Christmas, Advent is a pretty exciting time.

Plus you get to sing all those great Advent songs – “Hark the Glad Sound the Savior Comes!” “O Come O Come Immanuel” or that one we just sang – “Savior of the Nations, Come!” Beautiful songs aren't they – combining powerful words with moving melodies, talking about the 2 comings of our Savior: as a baby and then as the Judge of all! I mean, think about what you were singing this morning.

“Savior of the Nations, Come.” That's a pretty powerful invitation. Come Immanuel?! You know that means “God with us” right? You're asking God to come. You do realize how guest lists work, don't you? There is a directly proportional relationship between the quantity and importance and pickiness of the invitees to the level of stress the inviter might feel, isn't there? And you just invited the one who fills heaven and earth, the one who rules all powers and authorities and the one who judges eternally according to a standard of absolute perfection. Savior of the Nations, Come?

As crazy as it sounds, yes, that is what we sang. Look at our text from Jeremiah 33 and see why that is such a beautiful song. Savior of the Nations Come! ...just as you said you would;

Savior of the nations come...to Do what needed to be done; Savior of the Nations come...to Gather us to your Eternal Home.

So, think of that party invitation list again. Imagine you're putting on a Christmas party and want the most important people in your life there – so you invite your family, your friends, your boss, and, of course, the president of your country, right? Now, if you're thinking like I am, you can probably be pretty sure your friends and family will want to come, and, depending on where you work – you might have a decent shot at getting your boss there – but the president, really? No way, right? There is no way the president of the United States will show up at your party just because you are one of the 228 million adult citizens of his country. You are too unimportant, your house is too humble, your connections are too weak.

Unless, of course, for some reason, the president told you he'd be there. Then, you might have a shot. Look at our text. Look at what the Savior of the Nations says. Verse 14: **“The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.**

The people of Israel didn't deserve to have Immanuel – “God with them”. The nation that bore the name Israel (the northern Kingdom) was already annihilated and scattered by the Assyrians because of their rejection of the LORD. The Southern Kingdom was in the middle of getting seemingly obliterated as 2 groups of captives had already been taken to Babylon and Jeremiah is writing just months before the rest of the citizens of Jerusalem would be taken and the city leveled. Their house had nothing to commend it. And even after a remnant miraculously returned from Babylon, centuries later when this promise was about to be fulfilled, the setting wasn't any better. At the time Augustus was Caesar, that remnant of Israel was nothing more than a vassal state to the Romans, paying them off in order for permission to live. And yet our text says that God intended to keep his promises. And he did. That's what Christmas is all about. In Advent we remember those promises. God promised to come even though our invitation carries no apparent weight.

And so we invite him. Savior of the Nations, Come! You who are all glory, honor, and power...come! Even though we aren't all that important, come! And he does.

But now think about that. Back to the party scene: You just invited *the* most important people in your life to you to your house. Are you making the list in your head for what you need to do to prepare. You're cleaning frantically, preparing the food - pouring, stirring, steaming, simmering. The vacuum's out, there's flour everywhere and you're covered in sweat, stain, and the scent of B.O. Then the doorbell rings. The guests have arrived. Would you really invite all those people and then not prepare yourself to greet them? They came to spend time with you – you'd want to be presentable, wouldn't you?

Think about that invitation we sang – “Savior of the Nations come.” We talk all the time about looking for his coming, waiting to see him, awaiting his arrival. We know he promised to come, but are you ready to get the door? Every minute of every day – are you ready to greet your Savior? When you think no one else can see what you're watching or where you're surfing, when you know no one can hear what you're thinking, when you're upset and feel justified speaking the way you do – are you ready to welcome him? When you're filled with frustration and stress because there is just too much to do for Christmas, do your preparations ever actually prevent you from being ready? The answer is yes. Absolutely.

Our preparations could never prepare us to welcome God. That's the simple truth. Our efforts would make us cringe to think he's coming. Not just because of some social faux pas, but because his holiness demands blood to pay for sin. It demands the payment of life, the death penalty. But now look at how the promise of his coming changed that. Here's verse 15: ¹⁵ **“In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.** You see, this is why he promised 2 comings. The first time, as the descendant of David, he came to do what is just and right. He was righteousness personified. Ten chapters earlier, Jeremiah had given this promised branch, this savior of the Nations the name: “The LORD our righteousness”. Jesus came to live perfectly under the law, creating a perfect record of a human life. He came to do what was just. The Savior of the Nations came to fulfill the justice demanded for every sin – a truly innocent sacrifice. This Savior of the Nations came to defeat our sin and death. He came, as he himself says, “To seek and to save the lost”,

to be the Savior of the Nations. So yes, we sing, “Savior of the Nations Come...to do what needed to be done”. He has.

So, do you see how this changes the party scene? No longer are you sweaty and unshowered. You’re no longer unprepared and unworthy. Your heart is the perfect home for this important guest. Verse 16 of our text describes how the fact that Jesus did come changes what we are: “¹⁶ **In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it (literally: she – God’s people, His Church) will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.**”

Did you notice what God did here? Ten chapters earlier, God through the prophet Jeremiah called Jesus – the Savior of the Nations – by the name “The LORD our righteousness”. Now he calls his people, his church by that same name – “The LORD our Righteousness.” Do you understand that? The Savior of the Nations has made you – the righteousness of GOD!

Put it back into the party scene – it’s completely flipped around – no longer are we trying to prepare something. He shows us that he has prepared it all. And he has invited us by making us worthy to be there. Because of the first coming of the Savior of the Nations we look forward to celebrating in Advent – you are the Righteousness of God. Because of the second coming of the Savior of the Nations we look forward to, you get to be his forever.

I think that’s why I love the quote on the base of that statue of Martin Luther at one of the schools I went to. I don’t even know if I have the words exactly right because I’ve prayed it so many times my mind may have already put it into my own words, but the essence of the prayer is this: “Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness. I am your sin. You became what you were not to make me what I am not.” Just like Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**” And that is what we are. So we sing – Savior of the Nations, come.

And now, during this next month, yes, you’ll be preparing for parties and family gatherings and gifts and cooking and decorating and all the rest – but don’t forget Advent. Use God’s Word to prepare your hearts to issue this invitation over and over again. Come, Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel. Savior of the Nations – come!
In Christ, Amen.