



THEME OF THE WEEK: **The Lord Comes Even Now**

The dawning of the church's new year is the dawning of Christ's presence among His people. The prophet Zechariah saw Christ's coming from afar. More than just seeing Jesus enter Jerusalem, he saw Jesus' righteousness coming to you. In your time he saw his ancient pagan foes defeated and forgotten. Peace has been spoken to the Gentiles. He saw Christ's gracious rule extending from sea to sea. Through Jesus' sacrificed blood, the prisoners in sin's waterless pit have been set free. When Satan tempts towards despair, "Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope!" (Zech. 9:12) Return to Christ by hearing and believing His Word.

SUN

SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 21:1-9 The Humility of the Lord that Comes Even Now**

Ostentatious displays of glory mark days of consequence and celebration. Think about the pomp surrounding presidential inaugurations, national holidays, the Olympics, and graduations from college. The anthems, parades, speeches, and flyovers help teach our kids that something important is happening. But where's Christ's glory when He enters Jerusalem? Where are the fireworks and fanfares to signal His divine kingship over all things? Jesus doesn't come in glory to shock and awe. Jesus comes in humility to save by the Word and faith. He comes as a servant, a sin bearer, and the sacrifice to expiate the world's sin. *Heavenly Father, teach me to despise the world's pomp and cling to true heavenly glory clothed in your Son's Word. Amen.*

MON

SCRIPTURE: **Psalms 1 An Introduction to the Songs of the Saints**

Nothing serves Satan's plans quite as well as boredom, the thought that you've heard all this 'Christian' stuff before. It never changes, so why should I pay attention? Pay attention because you live in the drought-stricken wastes of a world warped into the image of men's sins. Pay attention because the winds of God's judgement are beginning to blow. Under its blast this world's works and ways must wither and perish. But blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. Neither the blight of sin nor the wrath of God's judgment can uproot him. Planted in the cool streams of instruction and mercy he lives eternally. *Teach me to delight and be instructed in the songs of Your saints, O Lord. Amen.*

TUE

SCRIPTURE: **Romans 13:11-14 Salvation is Near**

Being unable to see the coming day of judgment doesn't mean that it's not coming at all. And yet that's how the demons have convinced many in the church to pursue lives in service of mammon and depravity. They've convinced the Christians that earthly immoralities are greater than the life to come. Or at least they've convinced them to think that they'll have enough forewarning to put their lives in order before the end. This is spiritual death. "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead!" (Eph. 5:14). The night is ending. The day of eternity, promised to the saints who have been awakened by faith in Jesus' death, is at hand. *Father, grant that I put on the Lord Jesus Christ in baptism and faith so that I'll make no provision for the flesh. Amen.*

WED

SCRIPTURE: **Jeremiah 33:14-18 A Righteous Branch**

Though we pray for "good and faithful rulers," the Lord causes us to suffer the governance of scoundrels from time to time. Their lack of faith and hostility toward the church tests our faith. The devil wants us to break under their pressure. As it was for the denizens of Jerusalem under their last unbelieving kings, so we also must learn from the prophet to put our trust in the right place. The Righteous Branch has come. He is with us now. He will come again. Though the world's justice might be broken, our justification before God has been made perfect through the Branch's blood and intercession. The Branch, Jesus Himself, is the heavenly righteousness of the saints who trust in Him. *Grant me to dwell securely in Your salvation, O Lord. Amen.*

THU

SCRIPTURE: **Luke 1:1-25 That You May Have Certainty**

Faith isn't having mixed feelings about what may or may not be true. It's the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). St. Luke wrote his gospel to give the conviction that historical events that you didn't see are true. He wrote it to build a foundation for saving faith in Christ. The miraculous events might seem beyond the capacity of rational people to fully accept, but that half-heartedness has no place in God's presence. To teach the true humility of faith that receives the Word with joy, Gabriel struck Zechariah mute. Better to lose our tongues and bodies in this life than to lose our souls by their lack of faith in hell. *O Lord, strengthen my certainty in Your mercy through the gift of the Spirit in the Gospel. Amen.*

FRI

SCRIPTURE: **Colossians 1:12-23 From the Domain of Darkness to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son**

These words are too high for us. And yet, these same words must be engraved on our hearts, committed to memory, and spoken out loud often for our comfort. Jesus is the "icon," the visible image of the almighty God. But He's no empty projection or mere representation of God. "All things were created through Him and for Him." Nor is He a lesser god. As is true only of God, "He is before all things." We're right to assert, "In Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Through His flesh born in time, through Christ's suffering and death, the infinite and immortal God "reconciled to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." *Grant me to continue in this faith, stable and steadfast, O Lord. Amen.*

SAT

SCRIPTURE: **Psalms 143 In Your Faithfulness Answer Me**

The 143rd Psalm is a prayer for spiritual peace in times of cross and trial. At the beginning and end of the prayer, you encounter these curious phrases that are unlike the language we use among one another. "In Your faithfulness, answer me!" "For Your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life! In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!" David isn't looking to cut a deal with God. He's casting himself completely on God and His grace. God's faithfulness, name, and righteousness give David the courage to demand deliverance. His sins ought to shame him into silence. But he knows the Lord's love. He knows God's faithfulness to His Word. He knows that his righteousness is not of works, but of faith. *Answer me quickly, O Lord! Amen.*

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