

## Advent I – 2023

“Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.” In the name...

With age—cause I’m getting up there—the return of Jesus grows all the more sweet. It occurs to me that the frame of mind which characterizes my generation, is not unlike the frame of mind that the likes of Mary and Joseph must’ve had before finding out that Jesus would be their son. It had been a thousand years. A thousand years since David and Solomon had ruled the world from Israel. It’s hard to keep any sort of hope and stamina and sincere faith alive for 1000 years (hard for ten years!), I don’t care if you are Israel. And by the time that Mary and Joseph arrive on the scene, Israel has been annexed, occupied, and colonized by a piggish Rome. Wanna talk about feeling like you’re goin through the motions—it must’ve felt like **fake** Israel with fractured politics. **Fake** religion with what would’ve been considered Roman morons standing around outside of your church (the Temple). Surely David had become more mythical bible story than hoped-for reality in the minds of dads trying to catechize their children, it had been so long. Their own **fake** king was a murderous, copulating madman. It’s clear that Mary, as evident in her often sung *Magnificat*, held to the promises of a Messiah with clenched iron fists. She was, in the utterance of her first word in Scripture, ten thousand times the ethical and political force that Rome would ever be. She was her own Kingdom, inside of whose womb, was an enthroned Christ. But I’m guessing she was unusual. Her cry for deliverance, quietly uttered from impoverished Judea, was as a thousand tornado sirens at noon on Saturday in its effect. Maybe Judea had fallen prey to many of the thought patterns of a post-modern age.

My generation feels quite justified with texts like this which seem to indicate that we can hope for very little progress in this world. You’ve heard me hint at this before. Jesus speaks of the end of the age in sobering terms—it will be one of ~~mass~~ confusion and fear. The world system has failed. Enter any room in OKC and hear the 40 and younger all declare their withdrawal from politics—a problem, but one indicative of our age. Here’s the thought sequence: If the most wealthy and militarized country in the history of the world still guns down 12 year olds and minorities and one another; and if the country with the most scientific progress and medical advances that have yet been known still rides waves of \$43 |

trillion dollars in debt to lesser economic powers—then the idealism of modernity is thrashed. It is hemorrhaging, and no amount of pressure to the wound seems to stop the bleeding. As the text says, it is confusing and fearful, and so my generation, which is viciously adrift in so many ways begins to lose faith in the world system. That is an opportunity—we should not be surprised. Rather, we should love. We should repent. We should seize upon worship—which is the message of Advent. When all around your soul gives way, lift up your heads, for Christ draweth nigh. He is coming. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup>like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup>Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

There will be signs in the sun, says the text. And clouds are mentioned. What is that to mean? It probably means what it says, but at the very least it means this, and I draw from St. John Chrysostom here: the beams of the cross of Christ shine far brighter than the beams of the sun! I will say this a thousand times: the full axis of everything is not the sun; rather, the full axis of the entire universe has its crux upon a cross that one spring afternoon in first century Palestine held the Son of God so that when horror seizes upon OKC in whatever new way, we look up in hope rather than out in vindictive destruction. As fall and winter fall upon the world systems that cause me to fear for my own children's future, we give them coming of the one Lord who spoke it all into existence. Do not fear! HE has overcome the world.

At this altar, Advent has already happened. Mary is vindicated in her hope. Are you tired? Feeling like a lot of fake motions these 2000 years later? The altar is, like the ark of the covenant, a throne of strength. That's why we bow in front of it. We not worshipping the furniture when we bow, we are worshipping the King. He has enthroned himself amongst...us?! We will declare his triumphal entry when we say, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." That's why the liturgy matters. We will honor him as the lamb who was sacrificed before the foundations of the world when we say, "O Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world." That's why the liturgy matters. When I say, "All glory be to Thee Almighty God our Heavenly Father," I'm not just repeating some great KJV-sounding sentiments. We are, instead, heralding forth that the crucified King has

come that we might delight in Him and He in us. Would you come even as he has come?

In the name...