

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Advent 1
Matthew 21:1-9
December 6th, 2017

When we greet our friends and relatives we will often say, “Hello, how are you?” We may or may not actually be interested in how someone really is. It’s just a part of the greeting. Maybe, for that reason, the response we say back understands this when we say, “I’m fine,” or “I’m doing well.” This is what we would call an “ordinary” greeting and an “ordinary” response. We may actually be interested in how someone is doing, or, we may actually be doing okay. Then again, maybe the greeter and the responder don’t really care all that much to get into all the details.

The ordinary is comfortable. It’s what we do. It’s how we greet people and it’s how we respond. I like the ordinary. I understand the ordinary. I’m familiar with the ordinary. Some say ordinary is boring but I think it’s exciting. Some feel as if they are missing out when life gets ordinary. I say, life is just the way I like it... calm, peaceful, familiar.

So, you won’t be surprised when I tell you that the familiar parts that make up the liturgy are called “ordinaries.” The reason: those parts of the church service are always there. The sermon, the prayers, the creed, etc. While some of these parts of the liturgy sound a little different from time to time, depending on the church-year, they are basically the same from the Sunday before, and the Sunday before that, and the Sunday before that... Which makes the “ordinaries” very ordinary.

Let me tell you about something else that is very ordinary. There was a son of a carpenter who desired to go to Jerusalem for the Festival of Passover. He chose an ordinary animal, a donkey, to take him on the journey from the Mount of Olives into the Holy City. He wore ordinary clothes. He looked like an ordinary person.

Rewind a thirty plus years before this event described in the Gospel text for today. There was an ordinary woman and man who made a journey on an ordinary donkey into an even more ordinary city called Bethlehem. This baby born on Christmas was nothing special to look at. Someone could have come along and said, “Ya, my baby is cuter than that one” (just as every mother has said to herself when comparing their child to another). There was nothing more ordinary than where He was born... a place where the animals ate and made their bed at night.

Yet in both cases there was also the “EXTRAORDINARY.” Going back to the text appointed for today, look at the people. Hear their shouts. Notice the palm branches and the words, “save now, oh King,” as Hosanna’s rang out. Jesus is coming and this no ordinary event. Jesus is coming and look what is in store for His people. EXTRAORDINARY things are about to happen from the story told in the text forward that would take Jesus before the Sanhedrin, to the palace, to Golgotha to die on the cross and to the grave.

And then see what is EXTRAORDINARY about the coming of a child to a not-so ordinary mother... a virgin. Hear with your ears the words that were shouted by the angels to lowly shepherds, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill toward men.*” See those gifts the Magi would bring because they came to worship the one true God, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. Do you see how God turns what is ordinary into that which is extraordinary? Do you see, as we now turn the page of the church-year calendar one more time, to a brand new year, how God breaks into this world with His blessed coming once again... from ordinary to extraordinary?

The church-year, the first Sunday in Advent begins with Jesus announced as the coming branch of King David, “*The Lord is our Righteousness*” in the Old Testament reading and the coming

King to save his people in the Gospel reading. Jesus is bursting onto the scene and the message of His coming is what Advent is all about. This ordinary man is not ordinary. He comes to do the extraordinary. The ordinary kingly line is what God would use to come and show how He has brought forth for you more than a king... This King is also God who comes to save. The ordinary becomes the extraordinary.

Think of this as a picture of your Christian life as well. Today you have before you the ordinary. The ordinary way we worship our Lord, the ordinary parts of the liturgy, the ordinary way God comes to you are happening today. Remember, the ordinary is not bad, not boring, but rather beneficial. Ordinary is good. But you have a life that you live on the other side of these walls. You live in a world where the ordinary meets the extraordinary on a daily basis. Some days and weeks your routine is all there is. Other days, surprise, excitement, or joy may be brought upon you. Yet other days, sorrow, distress, suffering may come your way. Within our ordinary days, come extraordinary events. These are the times we will long for the ordinary and we hate the extraordinary. These are times when the ordinary gifts of God becomes extraordinary means to combat the heart that is filled with pain, ravaged by fear, and hurts so badly.

Beloved in the Lord, these are the times when God's Word is put into motion beyond the Divine Service today and into your life. So, wherever you are and whatever you suffer, our Lord comes from his "ordinaries," like we have been hearing and seeing today, into the "extraordinary" situations of our lives. God's love produces extraordinary care to those who are suffering when His Word is brought to the person who needs it so desperately wherever they are. God's Word is given here to you, but not only here, when you receive the comfort of God's promises when you are sick, in great distress, or confused. This is the extraordinary love of Jesus put into motion for you.

Who brings it? Yes, your pastors do. But you do too. You bring the word of comfort and healing in extraordinary ways. You are the proprietor of the faith when you become a witness for the sake of His love for others. You are God's tool of extraordinary care for your neighbor. Don't hold back. Don't keep it to yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself and give to them what they need... the same thing you need.

So, bring those you love to this ordinary place and show them how extraordinary God is for them. From a mountain on a donkey to the Holy City in order to accomplish the most extraordinary work ever done... death on a cross to save you from death. Born in an ordinary town, in an ordinary manger, to ordinary people in order to become the King of all kings who comes for you.

So beloved, when you are a part of all that is ordinary around here... surrounded by ordinary people in the midst of the ordinary Word of God and Church Service, God is laying a blessed and needful foundation for His extraordinary work in the midst of the lives of His precious people. This work will meet you where you are at. This is where Jesus meets your neighbor through you. You see, you are a part of the extraordinary care of souls. You are a vessel that carries divine words of comfort and a message of hope in a lost world. Do not underestimate your vocation as Christian in this lost world. This world needs you and so does your church.

How are you today? I'm not asking because the greeting is ordinary. I really want to know. I have something to share... something ordinary and extraordinary. Death that turned to life for you. Love that knows no bounds. Forgiveness that is undeserved. How extraordinary... and it's yours! Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.