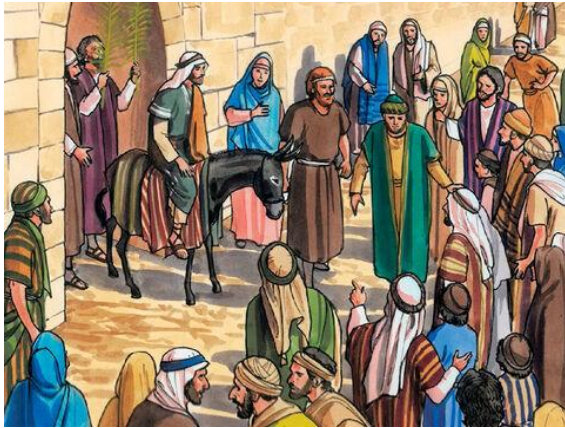


Sermon on 1. Advent Matthew 21, 1-11



As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" 10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." 12 Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.

Forough Farrokhzad was born in Tehran in 1935 and showed a talent for poetry from an early age. In a time and society in which women were often confined to the domestic sphere, she broke out of traditional roles and devoted herself to art. Her poems were revolutionary - they addressed love, passion, loneliness and the inner life of women in a patriarchal society. Forough Farrokhzad had a dream of a better world. And yet things turned out very differently. At the peak of her creativity, Forough Farrokhzad died in a car accident. She was just 32 years old. So many before her and after her have dreamed of a better world. And the question we want to ask ourselves today is this: Was Jesus also one of these many? In other words: He wanted a better world, but unfortunately failed tragically because of the wickedness of people.

At first, that seems to be the case. Because he first rides gloriously into the city of Jerusalem and Jesus mission seems to come to a grand climax! Jesus would finally defeat the evil of mankind and from then on there would be peace in the world. As we know, things turned out differently. Instead of a big peace party, there was an abrupt end of all dreams and the dream of a wonderful new world ended with a miserable sigh on the cross. But we soon notice that Jesus is very different from all other heroes and heroines in history. We can see this in the fact that he determines his own fate from beginning to end. He is not hyped up by a crowd of people or elevated to the status of a new leading figure by close advisors. No, he is master of his own fate and determines his own path, down to the last detail. Riding a donkey into the city of Jerusalem was of course part of his plan. Back then, the Jews knew that the Messiah would come on a donkey.

They also knew that the same Messiah would come from the direction of the Mount of Olives. That is exactly what Jesus did! And that was a very clear message. Here comes the Messiah riding on a donkey! And those who understood this message began to sing. At first it was just a few. Then more and more... Until a large crowd of people cheered him.

*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!*

The word Hosanna means: "Help us!" Or "be our savior." Of course, the people had great expectations and great hopes. They wanted to be free again. They wanted to be able to decide for themselves as a people and country, pay less taxes, be a great people again and be able to practice their traditions in peace. They thought that the Messiah was there to fix these things. That was their Jewish dream, as there have been and still are such dreams all over the world... And that was exactly what was not fulfilled! What a disappointment for these people when their hero and king himself had to suffer a miserable and shameful death! What a nightmare when these people who had shouted Hosanna now shouted the death of their hero: "Crucify him!" Yet it is clear what Jesus wanted. Exactly that. From beginning to end. That is how he wanted it. Anyone who has read the prophet Zechariah 9:9 and read about the Messiah on his donkey should know that the Messiah would come to establish a kingdom of peace and not to start a new war. Nor to finally fulfill a national dream of a certain people. This Jesus is not bent on defeating the Romans or any other dictatorship. His plan goes in a different direction. He wants to give himself. And when Jesus gives himself, he does not do things in a half hearted way. He does it completely. Because that is the only way he can be completely there for us! Jesus does not want to brighten up our lives here on earth a little with Christmas decorations, incense and a little surprise under the Christmas tree. He does not even want to start a new way of life in this world so that we humans can finally understand each other a little better. No, He wants to be there for us completely. When the Jews of that time expected Him to found a great empire, they expected too little. Jesus does not just want a world empire. He wants an eternal kingdom! Therefore, when we pray today: Hosanna! Lord, help! Then it is an emergency call: Lord, help us to get to where you are. Where you are completely there for us! Allow me, too, to be your child in your kingdom.

What are our hopes and expectations for the first Advent? The first candle on our Advent wreath is a sign of hope for us. It indicates that things are gradually going to get brighter and more beautiful around us from now on. Some people have already started to put together a wish list. The things that I want! The economy started making preparations a long time ago. There should be more of everything: More food! More drinks! More toys! More electronics! The very latest things that our markets can offer are now on display. Seen in this way, our wishes and dreams for the first Advent are not so different from the dreams of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. Our hopes and expectations are so closely related to the things that we know from our world! We do not want to welcome God or the Messiah. He should only give us what we have dreamed up for ourselves. And if our wishes and dreams are disappointed, we do not shy away from despising God and Jesus and even crucifying him again! Of course, we did

not imagine such a reception for our Jesus. That's why we didn't come to church on this first Advent. No, we want to do better than the others. We don't want to be influenced by shopping sprees and we don't want to turn Christmas into a feast of eating and drinking. We are one of the good ones! Aren't we?

Unfortunately, we are wrong at the point. This is because precisely when we deem ourselves to be better than others we have by-passed the Lord Jesus road to the cross. Our dreams of self-righteousness turn into a dense fog of self-deception and complete loss of direction. Because we humans are and remain very short-sighted in everything we do and, especially in our supposed piety, we only focus on ourselves and our own righteousness. That is not what our Lord Jesus intended for us! He wanted to be there for us completely! He wants to be there for us completely today too. He doesn't want us to come before him with our half-hearted and unfinished piety and even boast that we are better than the others. When Jesus comes to us, He wants to be there for us completely and not just half the way. That means we should be completely quiet and let him speak.

And what does his speech look like? Once again Jesus speaks through his actions! He comes to us on a donkey! He is very modest and not arrogant. And sometimes completely different from what we imagine. We may think that He is with us when we are very pious and do something special. But He comes to us with very simple words and even when we can't do anything at all. At Holy Communion and at baptism we do nothing. He is at work there and moves in and with us in His own way. He comes to us! Just as He did not want to send the Romans into the sea in a great coup, He does not want to force anyone to become His follower through power, through harsh laws or through manipulation. He comes meekly! It means that He allows it if someone says: "No, I don't want to!" And if someone says that they have nothing to do with Jesus and God, He does not let a lightning strike come down and kill such a person. No, He allows everything. Nevertheless He remains King. Even without our doing or wanting, He remains King! Even if He does not force us, He wants nothing more than for us to become and remain His children. He wants to establish His rule. That is why He teaches us to pray: "Your kingdom come!" What that means is not more power, more money, more fame. What it means is that His Holy Spirit lives in us. Only in this way can He protect us from Satan's attacks. Only in this way can we stand firm when Satan tries to tempt us with pomp, splendor and power. Only in this way can we, when our last hour has arrived, wait with confidence and hope for the new world that He will give us. When we greet our King this Advent, we do not greet him with clothes strewn on the path, but we greet him with faith in our hearts. This is how our mouths are opened and our hearts expand! Such faith is contagious! Back when the first people strew clothes on the path, some looked on in amazement, then they saw the bright, happy eyes... and that was contagious. They immediately joined in. More came...and more and more! Our faith is contagious! The faith that is more than the fog of human self-righteousness and deception is contagious! The faith that overcomes the gates of hell is this inconspicuous faith that stubbornly rejects the means of human power and is based on the lowly sacrifice on the cross.

This faith will not disappoint like an American dream, Jewish dream, German dream, or any other dream!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

Amen