

# Advent I

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Preacher: Fr. Paul Beutell

[ 0 : 00 ] Behold, your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. Worship this morning to hold the gospel in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. In the days when kings ruled the nations, and war was prevalent, before one nation fell to another, the conquering king would send ambassadors to lay out the terms of surrender.

If the terms were accepted, the conquering king would ride into the capital city of that nation on a donkey, symbolizing he had come for peace.

If the terms were not accepted, he would enter the city on a white horse, symbolizing he had come for war. In today's gospel lesson, we hear of Jesus entering into Jerusalem, the capital city of the land promised to God's covenant people on a donkey.

In Jesus' first coming, in his incarnation, his life in three years of ministry, he offered the world, both Jew and Gentile, terms of peace.

[ 1 : 15 ] What are Jesus' terms of peace? There are four of them. In St. John chapter 3, verses 5 through 7, he says, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. Jesus' first peace term is the reception of holy baptism, whereby we are made members of the new covenant people and citizens of Christ's kingdom, the church.

In St. John chapter 6, verses 53 and 54, Jesus says, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Jesus' second peace term is to eat and drink at the table he provides for the citizens of his kingdom. Faithful citizens do not eat and drink at foreign tables. They do not partake of the Lord's table and the tables of the world.

[ 2 : 37 ] In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 21, we are told, You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Jesus only permits his people to partake of the one bread that is his body and of the one cup that is his blood at the one table that is his altar.

Those who refuse to, refuse his terms of peace. Jesus' third peace term is to love and to serve as he loved and served.

In St. John chapter 13, verses 13 through 15, it says, You call me teacher and Lord, and you say, Well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. In today's epistle lesson, we hear this peace term stated this way.

[ 3 : 44 ] If there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor.

Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. Those who accept Jesus' peace terms love and serve one another. There is one final peace term Jesus requires of us to accept.

St. Matthew chapter 16, verses 24 through 26 declares it. Where Jesus says, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

Oh, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Citizens of Christ's kingdom follow the example of their king and master.

[ 4 : 54 ] We are called to die to ourselves, to let go of the things the world says we deserve to have, and take up whatever cross we are called to bear for the glory of God and the advancement of the kingdom, and follow Jesus Christ.

Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 8 exhorts, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Citizens of Christ's kingdom, those who have accepted his peace terms, gain this mind and follow this way. Brethren, these four terms are non-negotiable.

For over 2,000 years now, they have been on the table, and they will remain on the table until a future time, which only the Father knows. Have we accepted them?

[ 6 : 11 ] If we have, do our lives demonstrate their acceptance? 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 and 12 states, Beloved, I beg you, as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, meaning among those who do not believe.

That when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Our acceptance of Jesus' peace terms must become evident in the way we think, in the way we speak, and in the way we live. The faithful secure their citizenship in the kingdom by growing in Christ, and in doing so, gain the assurance of everlasting life.

2 Peter chapter 1, verses 10 and 11 states, Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So what do we think of Jesus' peace terms? Are they intrusive?

[ 7 : 42 ] Are they unfair? Many think they are. Others refuse to even consider them. They think God should not or would not make any terms at all.

That each person should be able to believe and do whatever is right in their own eyes. You and I have been given the grace and the wisdom to know better.

As 1 John chapter 5, verses 2 and 3 states, By this we know that we love the children of God, and we love God and keep His commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, meaning His word. And His commandments are not burdensome.

We know Jesus' terms of peace are benevolent, that they are loving. We know they are, in fact, life-giving. We know this, for He lived.

[ 8 : 44 ] He suffered, bled, and died, and then arose to make the way of peace for us. As Ephesians 2, 14 declares, Jesus is our peace.

We also know that one day, Jesus' peace terms will be taken off the table. On that day, those who have refused them will see a very different Jesus than the one who rode to Jerusalem on a donkey with terms of peace.

Revelation chapter 19, verses 11 through 16, describes our Lord's appearance on that day. John writes, Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.

And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns.

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine white linen, followed him on white horses.

[ 9 : 56 ] Now out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, and with it he should strike the nations. And he has on his robe and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Thankfully, we and all who accept Jesus' peace terms now, while they are still on the table, will be spared Jesus' wrath in his second coming. We will be clothed in the white robes of his righteousness and ride in the train of his disciples that follows him as he strikes down the rebellious nations and peoples of the world.

But for today, we need to be busy declaring Jesus' terms of peace to all whom we can. We must love and care about others enough to bring Christ to all we can and bring all we can to Christ so they too can accept his peace terms.

This is our duty as ambassadors. It is the good work God has prepared in advance for us to walk in as sojourners and pilgrims. In these days of peace, may we be faithful in the discharge of our duties.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.