

"The Switch and the Dimmer"

Text: Luke 19:28-40

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

I'm sure you've all seen dimmer switches before. Most of you probably have them connected to lights in your homes. We have a couple on the back wall of the church. Unlike their ancestors (rheostats and potentiometers), today's dimmers are actually rather sophisticated electrical devices. Without getting into how modern dimmers use TRIACS to clip sine waves (*the internet makes everyone an expert*) we focus this morning on the two functions with which all are familiar: the switch function can turn your lights on and off, the dimmer function can adjust or vary them.

There is application in these little devices to life itself. Many things in life are binary; that is, they are either on or off, good or bad, right or wrong, yes or no. There are other elements of life that just aren't that way. They aren't good or bad, but good, better, best – too little, too much, or just right. Just as you wouldn't want a simple on/off switch to regulate the volume on your stereo (all or nothing), so in life there is a place for regulation and moderation. **Think:** a glass of wine *vs* a **barrel** of wine.

This distinction also has extensive and profound application within the Christian religion, and it is often just here that the godless mount their most seductive attacks. The **devil's minions** routinely try to turn the switch into the dimmer (the binary into the variable) and vice versa. In other words, where God has established a clear right or wrong, yes or no, good or bad, they install one of their sliding dimmer switches. Where God calls for moderation and Christian judgment, they opt for the on/off switch. Biblical doctrine is mostly binary – true/false, yes/no. The Bible teaches that Jesus rose from the dead. The godless maintain it's not that simple. It's good enough to dim that down and believe he rose symbolically in the hearts of those who knew him. The Bible says that God created the universe in six days. The devil's dimmer allows for theistic evolution. The Bible says Christ was born of a virgin. **Apply** the dimmer and now maybe it was just a young maiden.

This is the phenomenon we will examine on the basis of our text for this morning, the difference between the switch and the dimmer approach to

God's Word. Our text is the familiar account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and it is found in the Gospel of Luke, the Nineteenth Chapter:

^{ESV} Luke 19:28-40 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near--already on the way down the Mount of Olives--the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

This is God's **Word**. In humble awe and thanksgiving for such a gift, and asking him to bless us through the study of these holy and perfect words, so we pray, "Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!" Amen.

Our text obviously describes the event we have come to know as Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. Since we typically therefore hear this text in Lent at the beginning of Holy Week, it may seem odd to find it here at the beginning of Advent. In Advent it is used as a reminder of Jesus' final return on Judgment Day – when all of creation will see him coming in unimaginable power, strength, and glory. It reminds us to look forward to that day when a much different Jesus will return to gather his children in his arms and carry us into the sublime presence of his heavenly Father.

Jesus wanted absolutely no one (either in the world of his day or in the generations who would follow) to have any doubt whatsoever regarding who he really was and what he was actually doing. You will recall that up until this point in his ministry Jesus for the most part had

forbidden his followers from shouting his praises or retelling the private miracles they witnessed. Now, as he entered Jerusalem, he not only allowed his followers to praise him as a king, he defied the order of the Pharisees to make them stop. His answer to them was powerful: **"I tell you if these were silent, the stones would cry out."** Since God himself had decreed it, nothing on earth could prevent the message from being told: *This is no ordinary king. This is the Promised Messiah.*

Consider the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of his day described in our text. On the one hand we hear Jesus' followers shouting out their songs of praise and worship: **"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"** On the other we hear the Pharisees demanding of Jesus: **"Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."** Just what was happening in our text? What was the underlying point of conflict and, more importantly, what can and should you and I learn from this confrontation 2000 years later?

Clearly the people were welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as a king. Spreading palm branches and clothing on the road was an act reserved for royalty. Yet there is no indication that the scribes and Pharisees had much of a problem with Jesus as king, with Jesus as an *earthly* ruler. In fact early in his ministry they tried to reach out to him on that basis. There is little doubt that had Jesus acknowledged and accepted the ongoing role of the scribes and Pharisees as the *religious* leaders, they would have been content to allow him to pursue whatever *political* or *secular* goals he wanted to achieve. What they objected to was when he drifted into what they believed to be their lane, their sphere of authority, when the crowd included: **"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"**

Their solution was the dimmer switch. The people, in their judgment, just went too far; that they got carried away in their enthusiasm. They therefore appealed to Jesus to dial down the enthusiasm. Yet the situation didn't call for a dimmer, it called for an on/off switch. The Pharisees had the terrible power to reject Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus would not allow them to pretend that he was something other than what he claimed to be. He insisted on the on/off, yes/no switch. He was the Messiah or he wasn't. There was no third option. The Pharisees were either absolutely right about him or they were absolutely wrong.

The distinction here – together with the lessons we need to learn – could not possibly be more important.

Popular thought in our day is that there is no binary on/off – right/wrong switch. Today's society, for example, would declare that the Jewish

leaders were right according to their beliefs, and the followers of Jesus were right according to their beliefs. Worse yet, our society would imagine that that would settle the matter. Their logic is mind-numbing. There is such a thing as objective truth. Obviously not everyone agrees on what that truth is, but that doesn't change the fact that there is a reality that is neither determined nor altered by popular opinion. The earth, for example, cannot be both round and flat. Those who believe it is flat don't just have "an alternate truth." They are flat wrong.

Here is how and why the lesson of our text is so timely. Either the Jewish leaders were right in their beliefs about Jesus, or they were wrong. More to the point, either you and I are right about our beliefs concerning Jesus, or we are wrong. There is no "dimmer option" here. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior of the world, and the one and only path to heaven, or he is not. That's binary, not dimmable. The world accepts a dialed down version of Jesus that casts him in the dim light of a good guy and moral example. Jesus himself, together with the whole of God's Word, does not allow that option. He is what he himself claimed to be, or he is a liar and a fraud. He entered Jerusalem as the Son of God and Promised Messiah, or as a pretender and blasphemer.

The ramifications of this have profound application to every single human being, including every single one of us. You and I, together with every other man, woman, and child, will be right or wrong on Judgment Day. The result of being right will be an eternity in heaven. The result of being wrong will be an eternity of unimaginable terror and agony. And what exactly will "right" look like? Again, no dimmer here. "Right with God" means perfect, sinless. Anything less is wrong, and therefore damnable. To put it another way, dimmed down perfect (or "pretty good") = failure. Better than most = failure. Not as bad as some = failure. Since we have all sinned, we have already failed the "perfect" test, so our one chance to be right is through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We cannot provide our own perfection, so someone else has to provide it for us. Faith in Jesus does not mean that we believe only that Jesus once existed or that he was a good guy. It means we believe that he cleansed us by paying our sin debt and by crediting us with his perfection.

There are, in fact, many on/off, right/wrong switches in the Christian religion. Each of us will stand before a holy, righteous God, or we will not. Each of us will be saved by our works, or we will not. Each of us will be saved by God's grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, or we

will not. In fact *saving* faith itself is yes or no, on or off. Saving faith is not dimmable. You have it or you do not.

To the godless it's all about sliders and dimmers. No absolute good and bad. No absolute right and wrong. No absolute truth and error.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself, "*What if I'm wrong? If it will be pass/fail on Judgment Day, how can I know I will not be declared to be a failure?*" The key is to go to the right place for your answers. Our text, for example, is a great place to start. Note how Jesus responded to the objection of the Pharisees. Jesus knew that to say the things his followers were saying to anyone other than the one true Savior God would indeed have been blasphemy. Yet Jesus not only refused to rebuke his disciples, he informed his critics of the God-ordained *necessity* of their proclamation: "***I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.***" By this statement, not only was Jesus declaring that his disciples were absolutely right – both in what they said and in what they believed concerning Jesus – he is also telling *you* that *you* are absolutely right in also believing what you do about Jesus. The time had come to declare to the world the truth about this Jesus of Nazareth. That truth would be told by Jesus' followers, or by the very rocks if those followers were silenced. God had decreed it.

The great lesson for you? You are NOT wrong. The Promised Messiah was and is Jesus Christ, and no man can be saved by any other means. The man, woman, child who trusts the perfect life and innocent death of Jesus Christ as the full payment for all of their sins has it exactly right, and the declaration of that fact will be made on Judgment Day. Every other path can lead only to eternal damnation. "***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***" (Mk. 16:16 ESV) So says our God, who is himself the very essence and definition of truth and of life eternal. In Christ, you are redeemed. In Christ, you are forgiven. In Christ, you have been saved. Amen.

ESV **Jeremiah 33:14-16** "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"

ESV **1 Thessalonians 3:9-13** For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? ¹¹ ¶ Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹² and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

ESV **Luke 19:28-40** And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near--already on the way down the Mount of Olives--the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The 1st Sunday in Advent – December 1, 2024

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 705 (Brown Hymnal)

"Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Jeremiah 33:14-16) We have entered a new church year, as well as the season of Advent. This is the time we celebrate the fulfillment of what was long ago foretold in our Old Testament Lesson by the Prophet Jeremiah. The promise made by God the Father has been honored. The promised Savior has been given as a gift to the world. What a privilege to know and believe this life-giving truth.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 24 (Supplement Page 25)

The New Testament Lesson: (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13) In our second reading Paul prays that those who read his letter might express their love for their God by showing their love for each other. While we know that such charitable feelings and actions do not represent the sum and substance of the holiday season we begin this morning, it is certainly right that Christians demonstrate their love for their Lord in their treatment of one another – while we look with eager anticipation to the Second Coming of our Savior Jesus.

The Baptism Hymn – 753

"Let the Children Come to Me"

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Baptism of Chevelle Nahala Loeb

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 63 (Red Hymnal)

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 19:28-40 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

"The Switch and the Dimmer"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 528 (Stanzas 1-5) (Red Hymnal)

"If God Himself Be for Me"

The Prayers of the Day followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 56 (Stanzas 1 & 5) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (50) Average (36) Wednesday (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-6:00 p.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Advent Service
Saturday	-6:00 p.m.	– Annual Church Christmas party
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Drew Naumann is considering the call to Faith of Manchester, MO.

Updated Contact Sheet – Copies of the updated Member Contact sheet are available on the mailbox table. Please take a copy home with you.

Advent Services – The first of our three annual Midweek Advent services is scheduled for this Wednesday (December 4) at 7:00 pm.

Congratulations! – God has delivered to Dalton and Allison Loeb a beautiful, healthy baby girl – Chevelle Nahala Loeb, who is scheduled to be baptized during the service this morning. We give thanks to You, O Lord, for You are good!

Annual Church Christmas Party – A sign-up sheet for the annual Christmas Party (which is scheduled for this Saturday, December 7th) is available on the Mailbox Table. Please address any questions to Cindy Ollenburger.

Usher/Cleaning List – The 2025 Usher/Cleaner schedule has been completed. You will find a copy in your mailbox.