**Advent Vespers III,**

 **The Third Sunday in Advent,**

 **11 December 2022**.

 *Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ Stands before the Nations in the Gospel**

**to Forgive Sins and Save.”**

And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

**Micah 5:4**.

**Introduction**.

 Here again we see that Christ’s Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and not a civil kingdom.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 Christ stands before the nations not to wield the sword but to feed them through the Word.

 Christ does not have a kingdom throughout the world civically. Many peoples reject Christ, although ultimately He rules them by His Almighty Power.[[2]](#footnote-2)2 Rather we do see His Rule in the hearts and minds of men throughout the world through His Word.

 Through His Word Christ governs people with the Grace and Mercy of the Cross and Christ’s Atonement for the sins of all men. Through the Grace and Mercy of the Cross Christ forgives sins and gives life everlasting.

 Christ stands before the nations in the Gospel to forgive sin and give life everlasting.

**I. The Cross of Christ Forgives Sins and Saves.**

 Notice one again from the Prophet Micah that the Cross of Christ is not just for the people of Judah but for all nations. The Prophet Micah writes:

And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

Likewise the Prophet Isaiah, who was working at the same time as the Prophet Micah[[4]](#footnote-4)4, writes of Christ being the Savior of all men:

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation uno the end of the earth.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

The Cross is for all men because God desires to save all men from their sins through the Cross of Christ. Jesus says:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

Sin caused men to perish. God sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world in order to Atone for those sins by suffering the death men deserved for their sins on the Cross. Through Christ’s Passion sins are forgiven by God and men are saved.

**II. Christ Stands before the Nations in the Gospel to Forgive Sins and Save.**

 **A. Christ stands before the nations in the Gospel.**

 But where does Christ stand before the nations? Christ stands before the nations in the Gospel. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

 The Cross of Christ is lifted up to the nations through the Gospel. The Prophet Isaiah writes:

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

The Apostle St. John writes:

Jesus answered and said, ... Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he would die.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

Luther writes:

10. *In that day the Root of Jesse. They shall pray for*. More correctly: “they shall seek.” In Rom. 15:121[[10]](#footnote-10)0 Paul says “they shall hope”; ... In Hebrew it is: “And His rest shall be glory.” ... This passage shows the Gentiles agreeing and becoming one body with the Jews in Christ1[[11]](#footnote-11)1 and Christ’s kingdom spreading throughout the world. This applies properly to us, just as Paul also cites it for the Gentiles. ... So Christ Himself explains this passage in John 12:32: ... “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself,” ... But to seek means in sincere faith to cling and to rely and to take care that He alone will be kept. ... *Stands as an ensign to the peoples*. ... Therefore it stands and is lifted up by the Spirit through the Word.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

**B. Jesus forgives sins and saves through the Gospel.**

The Prophet Micah makes it plain that Jesus is lifted up through the Word, namely, through the Gospel:

But in the last days [the New Testament era1[[13]](#footnote-13)3] it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law1[[14]](#footnote-14)4 shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

Likewise the Prophet Isaiah writes:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law1[[16]](#footnote-16)6 , and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

 Through the Word of the Lord, Micah and Isaiah write, the Mountain of the House of the Lord is exalted. *The Mountain of the House of the Lord, Mt. Zion, is where Christ was Crucified for the sins of all men.*  *Thus Mt. Zion is exalted above all others because, as Jesus says, His Cross planted on Mt. Zion is lifted up and all men are drawn or flow to Him, as the Prophets Micah and Isaiah write, through the Word, the Gospel of the Forgiveness of sins of the Cross*. Through this Forgiveness of sins and salvation Christ becomes great by faith in the hearts of believers throughout the world. The Prophet Micah writes:

And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

So the Virgin St. Mary confessed in her *Magnificat*:

My soul doth magnify [make great] the Lord ... .1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

The Lutheran Church confesses:

For they first say this, namely, that *the name of the Lord will be great*. This is accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel. For through this the name of Christ is made known, and the mercy of the Father, promised in Christ is recognized. The preaching of the Gospel produces faith in those who receive the Gospel. They call upon God, they give thanks to God, they bear afflictions for their confession, they produce good works for the glory of Christ. Thus the name of the Lord becomes great among the Gentiles.2[[20]](#footnote-20)0

**Conclusion**.

 Christ stands before the nations in the Gospel. Through the Gospel Christ Blesses men with the Forgiveness of sins won for them by His Passion.

 Through this Forgiveness of sins Christ saves men from sin and gives unto them life everlasting.

 ***Amen.***

1. 1“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” **St. John 19:36**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” **Psalm 2:9** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Micah 5:4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4“His [Micah’s] prophetic activity extended through all or parts of the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, during the second half of the eight century before Christ. He was therefore a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament*, Vol. II, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, p. 675, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Isaiah 49:6**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**St. John 3:16-17**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7**I Corinthians 11:26**. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8**Isaiah 11:10**. “Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” **St. Matthew 11:28-30**. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**St. John 12:30, 31-33**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10“And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.” **Romans 15:12**. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace ... .” **Ephesians 2:15**. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 16, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13“And it shall come to pass in the last days ... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the among the nations, and shall rebuke many people ... .” (Isaiah 2:2a, 3b, 4a, emphasis added.) The “last days” is the Old Testament expression for the New Testament era. cf. Acts 2:16-21, I Cor. 10:11, I Tim. 4:1, II Tim. 3:1, Heb. 1:1-2, Heb. 9:26b, James 5:3b, I Peter 1:5; Council of Chalcedon: “... He was begotten before the world out of the Father according to the deity, but that the same person was in the last days born for us and for our salvation of Mary, the virgin, and mother of God, according to the humanity ... .” Catalogue of Testimonies**, To the Christian Reader,** *Triglotta*, p. 1109, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14The word used here is *torah*. While one immediately thinks of the law when one hears or reads *torah*, it does not necessarily mean law as in the “Law of Moses.” *Torah* comes from the Hebrew word *yarah*, which means to instruct. In this case it refers to instruction in the Gospel which makes one wise to salvation (**II Timothy 3:15**) because it applies both to the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentiles were never subject to the Law of Moses. Hence, *torah* refers here to the instruction of the Gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**Micah 4:1-2**, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16The word used here is *torah*. While one immediately thinks of the law when one hears or reads *torah*, it does not necessarily mean law as in the “Law of Moses.” *Torah* comes from the Hebrew word *yarah*, which means to instruct. In this case it refers to instruction in the Gospel which makes one wise to salvation (**II Timothy 3:15**) because it applies both to the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentiles were never subject to the Law of Moses. Hence, *torah* refers here to the instruction of the Gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**Isaiah 2:2-3**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18**Micah 5:4**. King David likewise writes of Christ’ Dominion stretching out to the ends of the earth. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” **Psalm 72:8**. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**St. Luke 1:46**, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article XXIV. (XII.)**.32, *Triglotta*, p. 395. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)