



He Comes to Our Arena

Begin with hymn: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming", *LSB* 359

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God (Isaiah 35:1-2).*

Isaiah paints an image with words that is especially meaningful in Advent. In this chapter, he describes the effect of the coming of the Messiah as similar to a refreshing shower of rain to a desert region. In Advent we celebrate Christ's coming to our region. He leaves His exalted throne to come to the place we are. His birth on our earth manifests His presence in our arena which began at His conception. The concept of Christ entering our arena paints a haunting picture. **Arena** draws its origin from the Latin, *harena*, fine sand used in the coliseums of ancient Rome. This sand was used to absorb the blood of animals and Christians killed in sport. Christ enters our arena and the blood that pours from Him soaks our sand.

When Jesus comes to our world, He finds sand sometimes still wet from our tears, still wet with the blood-letting of our many conflicts and crisis created by our arrogance and pride. He finds soil hardened and cracked with our stubbornness, cynicism, and purposeless, selfish wanderings. It is an arena filled with our sin. That is the arena He enters.

Jesus comes to fill the cracks of our civilization with Himself. His self-giving sacrifice and victorious resurrection provide a healing that we could not accomplish for ourselves. God's forgiving love in Christ is the only plane that can level and smooth our jagged edges. His caring alone can fill the cracks and meaningless voids in our life. He meets us in our arena and soaks our sand with His own blood. And our desert can bloom with a joy and peace that transcends all human understanding.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we can never sufficiently thank You for sending our Brother, Jesus to buy back Your once-perfect creation. We thank You for calling us to faith in our baptism and continually nourishing our faith in You. Give us the humility and wisdom to look again at our sins this Advent season. And in looking at them, bring them to You for forgiveness and healing. Give us again a joyful heart that we may welcome our Savior aright. Give us courageous hearts to witness to the One who came for us and comes to us each day in Your Word. In His name we pray. Amen.

Scripture references are from the ESV.