

Populus Sion
St. Luke 21:25-36
December 9th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Son of Man Coming in a Cloud with Power

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We are told by our Lord + Jesus Christ that the sign of the end times is the same as it is in nature. Around this time of year, we see the trees losing their leaves. The earth grows cold and the skies grow gray and cloudy. This is a yearly and constant reminder to us that the earth is growing old; that the Last Day is fast approaching. When we see these things, we are to lift up our heads to the gates of Heaven; we are to focus on our Lord + Jesus Christ and His redemption. For when we see these things, we know that our righteousness draws near.

Also given as a sign is the fear and expectation of nations and individuals. For, when the Last Days are upon us there will be great tribulation, as has never been before seen. We see this in our world in these days. Just as the flow of the seasons is a constant sign for us that the end is near, so too is the distress and perplexity of nations and individuals. The Church is constantly under attack. Our beliefs are mocked. Our teachings are disregarded. The pews in the Church grow empty. People are more concerned with their earthly lives and their earthly worries than they are for the things of their soul and in the Church.

All these things are signs for us. It is the devil's last feeble attempt to silence the voice of our Lord; to drive us away from the Church; to destroy our faith in our Lord + Jesus and the salvation that is found in Him alone. These constant signs should serve us by showing us that the Lord is coming soon. They should make us desire to cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus Christ and His salvation even more than we have. The signs of the times should urge us to look up to Heaven and rejoice that our redemption is near.

This Gospel reading clearly shows us the third way that our Lord + Jesus comes to us in Advent; His coming on the Last Day. His coming will be in the cloud and with great power and might. Certainly, this reflects the words of the angels at His ascension into Heaven, when He was taken up into a cloud, and the angels prophesied that He would return in the same fashion. But, this coming in a cloud with great power and might also reflects what we have been observing in our study of the Old Testament. The Lord's presence among His people was indicated by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. The Lord was present with the children of Israel in the Tabernacle of Meeting, whenever the cloud

was present in the Most Holy Place. When it removed itself from the Tabernacle of Meeting, the children of Israel would follow the cloud to the place where the Lord God would lead them, and they would set up the Tabernacle of Meeting once again, and the Lord God in the cloud would rest in the Holy of Holies as a physical sign of His presence with the people.

The Lord + Jesus on the Last Day will come in the same fashion. He will come in a cloud with great power and might. He will bring our redemption from the attacks of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh on that Day. This should cause us, and all those who hear the Word of the Lord, great joy. As the world and unbelievers are filled with fear and expectation, the Church is filled with joy and confidence in our Lord's redemption for us.

This is why the Lord + Jesus offers the parable of the fig tree. The signs that lead to the Last Day all reflect destruction and the end of things. These things should cause the world great consternation, as it realizes its own eternal end. But, the sign of the fig tree is all about new growth. You know that summer is coming—and not the drab and cold of winter—by the leaves that are budding in Spring.

In other words, our Lord + Jesus pictures for His disciples—and us—the Last Day as a day of joy and happiness. A day we long for, just as we long for summer days during this time of year when we have cold and gray and ice and snow. The summer is coming. The Day when it is warm and sunny, and enjoyable weather.

These things are all symbols. The cold and drab reflects the unrighteousness of man and this world. One does not have to look very hard to see how corrupt this world is; how full of sin and unrighteousness this world truly is. Just watch any TV show, it will show you the depravity of mankind. Every sin that man is pleased with is on full display. This is why our Lord + Jesus warns us to not be weighed down with the things of this world. He listed the common sins of His day: carousing, drunkenness, cares for this earthly life. Do not be consumed by these things. The same is to be said about the sins that our world and society promote religiously. Do not be weighed down with the things of this life; do not be weighed down by the apostasies of this world. Instead look to the Lord + Jesus and His redemption.

This is why the Lord presents us with the newly budding fig tree. The fig tree bearing its new leaves is a symbol of the glories of Heaven, when we will be free from the burden of sin and shame, and live with our Lord + Jesus for all eternity. While the world and unbelievers only see the destruction and corruption of mankind, we who cling to our Lord + Jesus in faith only sees the approaching coming of our Lord Who will remove all these cares and concerns from us. He will remove sin from us once and for all. He will take us to our eternal home in Heaven. He will fill us with an eternal joy. No longer will we sorrow and be filled with tears from the struggles of this life. We will dwell with our Lord + Jesus for all eternity when He comes in the clouds with great power and might.

The Day is surely drawing near. The Day when our Lord's redemption fills the entire Earth, and all the believers on the Lord + Jesus will lift up their voices in praise and adoration to Him for all eternity.

This is why the Church's year is set up the way that it is. The Church's year also has low and high points. We are currently in Advent—a time of humility and penitence, which is reflected in the use of the penitential color of violet. This time in the Church is meant to help us focus on the low points in life. But, this reflection on those times is always a time of looking forward. Just as we may in this life suffer times of hardship, during those times we look for the relief from the hardship. When we struggle with sin, we look for the time when forgiveness is pronounced to us. When we are sick, we look to the time when we will be healthy, or to the time when we are finally removed from this vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven. During Advent we look to the time of our Lord's coming. We look to the time

when He will come in the clouds with great power and might and take us to our eternal home in Heaven. We look to the Day when our struggle with sin will be over; when we will finally enjoy the benefits of the forgiveness won for us on the tree of the holy cross.

That Day, my dear friends, is coming quickly. The signs are there. There is great fear and expectation in the world. The days are gray and cold. Faith in our Lord God is diminished in the world. The time for the leaves to start budding and signaling the coming of summer—the coming of our Lord's eternal redemption is drawing near. The time when warmth and sun and faith will abound is quickly coming. Therefore, lift up your heads to Heaven, and cling to the Lord + Jesus in faith. Rejoice that our suffering is soon to be over. And that the time for our eternal dwelling in Heaven is fast approaching. The Day is surely drawing near. Let us give thanks and praise to our Lord + Jesus Christ alone. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!