

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 24:15-28  
November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Augusta Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## There Will Be Great Tribulation

*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.

What is an abomination? An abomination for our Lord is any idol; any false god that we worship. An *“abomination of desolation”* is when that idol is placed in the Lord’s Temple—the place where our Lord’s presence should reign supreme. Therefore, when we talk about the *“abomination of desolations,”* we are not talking about some tragic event. That is to say, the *“abomination of desolations”* is not be listed alongside terrorist attacks, hurricanes, cancer, Lou Gehrig’s disease, election results, or any other awful disasters, tragedies and afflictions that worry and scare us. Rather, the *“abomination of desolations”* is far worse than the most horrific tragic event you can imagine, because it places false worship in the Church—in the place where only the Triune God should be worshiped.

The *“abomination of desolation”* is first spoken of by the Prophet Daniel. It comes on the day when the sacrifices are no longer performed (this is written in Daniel 9, 11, and 12). When that happens, in place of the sacrifices, an outrage and atrocity and sacrilege—a true abomination—will be set on the altar. A false idol is placed on the altar. This blasphemy will be abominable not simply because it will sit where the sacrifice should sit; but it will be regarded as the chief means of hope and salvation. People will look for the hope of their salvation in a place where it is not to be found—in a false god. And this combination—the exchanging of the worship of true God for something that does not save—that is what will make not just the altar, but the soul forsaken of all consolation.

In simple terms, the *“abomination of desolation”* is our Lord warning us about is the day when He withdraws His mercy, because we have stopped looking to Him for that mercy. For what was the purpose of the sacrifices? In the Old Testament, they were constant reminders and foreshadowings of our Lord’s own sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross. Just as we have been learning in Bible class. And for us now, the sacrifice that brings our Lord’s mercy is the one and only sacrifice of Himself on the cross, which He made for the atonement of the sins of the whole world. This sacrifice of our Lord’s crucified Body and shed Blood is presented and offered on the altar in, with and under bread and wine so that all who partake of it might be given His mercy—the forgiveness of your sins. And in being made one body with Him through this meal, we may dwell in Him, as He dwells in us and all who partake of this meal with us in true fellowship.

However, the day our Lord's sacrifice is taken from us; the day we no longer have faithful ministers, but men who follow the dictates of their own hearts and the false lies of the world; the day all sorts of false worship takes place in the church's that claim to bear His name—the day that happens will truly be the most abominable day. For it means not that our Lord has turned against us, but that we have given ourselves over to our base desires; that we have gone our own way; and that all His pleading and seeking and inviting and cajoling through His preached Word has fallen on deaf ears and stone-cold hearts. That is a most dreadful and mournful day—the day when people refuse to hear the Lord's Word and instead prefer the sinful desires of their own hearts and that which pleases their self-serving, self-interested passions. In that day, our heavenly Father—because He will not force Himself on anyone—in that day, He will withdraw the hope of salvation and mercy that He has promised to them; that which they have already rejected through their unbelief.

What a dreadful and mournful day that will be—the day when our Lord will no longer show mercy; the day true worship of the Lord ceases on account of man's unbelief; the day the Lord watches in sorrow as His creation rejects Him; the day that mankind refuses to believe on the Lord and receive His Son's life-giving sacrifice and allow our self-chosen forms of worship to take over; the day we exchange the true place of our Lord's mercy for a place that gives no mercy at all. On that day there will be great tribulation of men's souls.

Could that day ever come—a day when we choose to completely and absolutely abandon the Lord's mercy and save ourselves by our own false means? Will that day ever come?

It did for Jerusalem. In the year 70 AD the city, and more importantly the temple—the place of the daily sacrifice and mercy of the Lord—was destroyed; and the entire area was left desolate. All because the Jews preferred to reject the sacrifice of God's Only-Begotten Son on the cross for the payment for their sins.

Yet even as He knew this was about to happen, our Lord continued to extend His mercy to all that would hear His warning, to all that would heed His plea to abandon schism and heresy and blasphemy so that they would not be abandoned.

It is this merciful, plaintive plea that you hear in today's Gospel. In His mercy, our Lord pleads with and warns not just the citizens of Jerusalem in His day; and not simply all the inhabitants of Judea; but all peoples of all times and places—even us today.

Our Lord + Jesus warns us not to give in to the comforts of the flesh; not to take what looks like a winnable compromise; not to succumb to the false idea that we can withstand and survive on our own. And our Lord + Jesus pleads with us to flee to His mercy, to the loving embrace of His holy catholic Church, to the places where His once and only sacrifice is still given as He first instituted them. For there is His mercy—not where it suits us, but where He gives it. And there is His mercy—not in isolation, but in communion with Him and all who believe on Him. And there is His mercy—not necessarily around our notions of success and strength, but around the faith and liturgy His Holy Ghost gives. For that is where our Lord's mercy remains intact and unsullied.

Often, here in this place, we plead with the Lord to have mercy, to be merciful, and show us His mercy. Next Sunday we will beg Almighty God not to deal with us after the severity of His judgment, but according to His mercy when He separates the goats from the sheep. And today, our Lord shows us where His mercy is found, where it is given, where it is most true and sure. It is found in His preached Word and administered Sacraments.

For our Lord + Jesus says, "*Wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*" In other words, our Lord's mercy is given most chiefly in His holy Body and precious Blood given and

shed for us. For in that Blessed Sacrament the carcass—the “body” in the Greek language—is given to us eagles to feed upon for our eternal sustenance.

This merciful Sacrament is found not in the places where we, or the world, would prefer to look. But wherever the Lord + Jesus is, wherever His self-sacrifice for the sins of the world is given most clearly and certainly, wherever the holy offering of Himself is freely available unmingled with false worship and false communions—there is His mercy, most true and sure. And the eagles gather around this Holy Sacrament administered by the Lord’s ministers. The Lord’s called and ordained ministers point us away from ourselves, away from our fears and desires, away from all the vacant abominations—and toward our Lord + Jesus with His Father and His Holy Ghost in His holy catholic and apostolic Church. For there is where our Lord’s mercy is most truly, most surely, most unmistakably given.

To this Lord + Jesus Christ, Who is the Father’s mercy in the flesh, together with His Holy Ghost Who desires to gather us into His holy Body, belongs all glory, honor and worship now and forever. 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!*