

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 24:15-28
November 10th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

See, I Have Told You Beforehand

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we most heartily thank Thee that by Thy word Thou hast brought us out of the darkness of Papacy into the light of Thy grace: We beseech Thee, mercifully help us to walk in that light, guard us from all error and false doctrine, and grant that we may not, as the Jews, become ungrateful and despise and persecute Thy word, but receive it with all our heart, govern our lives according to it, and put all our trust in Thy grace through the merit of Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

We have entered upon the last cycle of Sundays for the Church's year. These last three Sundays propel us into the season of Advent. They prepare us by focusing our attention on the Last Things—the things that bring us to the consummation of our Lord's salvation for us and mankind. In a few short weeks we will begin the season of Advent, where we will focus on our Lord's coming to us in His incarnation, in His Word and Sacraments, and on the Last Day. The season of Advent always begins with the Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew detailing our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the same reading we hear every *Palmarum*—Palm Sunday. In that reading we hear of the joy the people had for our Lord + Jesus coming to the holy city of Jerusalem. The people were overjoyed at His coming to them.

However, we heard on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday what our Lord + Jesus was doing while the crowds shouted acclamations and laid down before Him palm and olive branches, and even their very own garments. In the midst of this scene of a victory parade, the One Who was hailed as a conquering hero was weeping. Our Lord + Jesus openly wept as He approached the city walls of Jerusalem, because in His foreknowledge, He saw its destruction. He saw that not one stone would remain on top of another. The entire city would be raised.

Our Lord + Jesus shared this with His Apostles. The Apostles could not at that time see what our Lord + Jesus foresaw. Therefore, one of them remarked as they walked about the city of Jerusalem how beautiful it was, and how glorious the Temple was. Not one stone would remain upon another. The city of Jerusalem was slated for destruction, on account of the sins of the Jewish people—their unbelief and refusal to acknowledge the Messiah, and His coming.

The Apostles therefore asked our Lord about these things. When were they to happen? Our Lord + Jesus prepares His Apostles and the Church—He prepares us—by showing us what things

would happen before His return on the Last Day. He has told us beforehand, so that we might not lose faith or become discouraged when we are beset on all sides by trouble and woe.

This is, after all, a recurring theme in today's Introit. We are in trouble. We are under attack from our enemies; from those who persecute us with false and misleading teachings. There are many things in this world and life that attack us and our faith in the Christ. The devil, the world and our own flesh is constantly trying to draw us away from our faith in Christ. The devil wants us to despair in our sinfulness; to be consumed with how we are so unable to do the good works that we desire to do, but fail miserably daily and often. He wants to lead us away from trusting solely in the works and merits of the Christ—His work of redemption for us by His fulfilling the Law perfectly, and offering up His life in our place on the tree of the holy cross. And if the devil cannot get us to despair over our sins, then he leads us down into the other ditch, where we are led to believe that our good works are so great and spotless.

This is how it is with us. We are either despondent over our sins, or we believe ourselves to be such "good Christians." If your heart is leading you into despair or pride, do not listen to your heart. This is just a tool of the devil to lead you away from your one, true source of salvation—the Lord + Jesus Christ. Do not listen to the devil and go into the desert or the inner rooms, for the Christ and your salvation is not found in your inability to keep the Law of God, nor is it in your ability to keep the Law of God. Our salvation is found in the Christ; in His works and merits on our behalf. This is why He came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. He came to His people to save His people by fulfilling the Law for them perfectly and suffering and dying on the tree of the holy cross.

This is why the Lord + Jesus weeps as He approaches the city of Jerusalem amidst the jubilant shouts of victory because He sees on how many sides the Church—His beloved Bride—is beset with danger and trouble. The world also attacks us from all sides. The world puts forth so many false ideas and teachings that sometimes even the elect—the chosen of God—are led astray. There are those who teach people to pray to the saints in times of trouble, instead of going to the One True Mediator that we have—the Lord + Jesus—Who sits on the right hand of the heavenly Father and intercedes for us night and day. The world wants us to chase after every sort of false god. There are those who claim to be members of the Church, who would say that the Jews and Muslims worship the same god as we do, because we all draw from a similar source document of the Old Testament. But one cannot not worship a Triune God if he does not worship one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The Jews and Muslims do not believe the Lord + Jesus to be the One, True Messiah, therefore they cannot worship the same god as the Church does.

People who say that they do, have set up an abomination of desolation in the Church. They have allowed a false idol to stand in the place where only the Triune God is to be worshiped and honored. This is simply another way in which the world, through false prophets in the Church, leads people away from the Christ—the Lord + Jesus.

Our own flesh also daily leads us away from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. How many times do we neglect to read the holy Scriptures or pray, or spend time in devotion to our Lord on a daily basis? We would rather scroll on Facebook, or watch videos on YouTube, or spend countless hours watching TV or playing video games, then doing what is necessary to safeguard our souls from the daily onslaught that we experience from the devil, the world, and our own flesh. Our every enemy wants to lead us away into the desert and inner rooms—into the places of drought and darkness—so that we are drawn away from the Christ—our only means of salvation.

We are surrounded by trouble on all sides, and yet we fail miserably to protect ourselves. Our Lord + Jesus sees beforehand our wretched state, and in His tears of mercy, warns us beforehand to guard ourselves against our enemies. How do we guard ourselves against our enemies? What must

we do to be saved? Well, we can do nothing to save ourselves. It is the Christ, our Lord + Jesus, Who comes down from Heaven to save us. He is the One Who sacrifices Himself for us, His beloved people. He is the One Who redeems us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He sends out His Word to us through His Apostles and preachers, who warn us beforehand of the troubles that we face, and point us to the one source of our salvation, the Lord + Jesus.

For those who have been told beforehand, the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ's works and merits on our behalf is not something that we can easily miss. Our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew compares the good news of His salvation to lightning flashing in the sky. It flashes from east to west. In other words, everyone can clearly see it. The light of the Gospel shines throughout the world to those who have been warned about the enemies that come to attack us and try and drive us away from the Christ. The Gospel is not found in the desert or inner rooms—in secret places—the Gospel is found where the lightning flashes; the light of the Gospel shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

We are in trouble daily. We are surrounded by our enemies of the devil, the world and our own flesh. When these enemies are exposed, do not bother to go down from the roof and into the house, or come from the field into the city, but flee quickly. Do not be like the wife of Lot who looked back at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and was turned into a pillar of salt. She desired to retain the things from which she was running. Instead of fleeing quickly she looked back to her own demise. Those who cannot flee quickly, like the pregnant and nursing mothers, will experience even more trouble. The same is true of those who experience trouble on hard days—the hard days of winter. The same is true of the Sabbath. The Jews could only travel so far on the Sabbath before they would be breaking the Law of God. In days of trouble they would have to choose between obeying the Sabbath regulation, or saving their life.

This is why our Lord + Jesus tells us beforehand of the trouble that we as the Church feel every day. His merciful heart desires our salvation. He wept for us when He saw how His beloved Bride the Church would be besieged on all sides by her enemies. We are besieged on all sides by our enemies of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the enemies to the Word of God, which proclaims the Christ, the Lord + Jesus. We may be in trouble daily and often, but our rescue is found in the Christ, and in Him alone.

Around our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, the Church gathers. This is where the eagles gather. We fly on eagle's wings, to the truth of the Gospel. We fly on eagle's wings to the place where our Savior dwells. Our Lord + Jesus dwells with us in these last days in His Word and His Blessed Sacraments. We gather around this altar, the throne of our Lord + Jesus, to feast upon His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. The eagles gather to consume the Body of our Lord. Here we remember His death for us, and we receive the forgiveness, life and salvation that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross. This is where we come when we are in trouble. We come to this house to be with our Lord and Savior. Therefore, my dear friends, flee your enemies and come to this house of the Word of God. Come be with the Lord Who wept for you, and suffered and died for you, so that you would have forgiveness from your sins. With this Lord + Jesus Christ we will live for all eternity. There in Heaven we will be joined by all those who died in the faith; who though they were surrounded on all sides by the enemies of the devil, the world, and their own flesh, fled to the Lord + Jesus, and found comfort and rest from all their troubles. May the Lord God Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit, that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living

here, and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!