

Populus Sion
St. Luke 21:25-36
December 8th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When These Things Begin to Happen

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, Who by Thy Son hast revealed to us that Heaven and Earth shall pass away, that our bodies shall rise again, and that we all shall appear before the judgment seat: We beseech Thee, keep us by Thy Holy Spirit in Thy Word; establish us in the true faith, graciously defend us from sin and preserve us in all temptations, that our hearts may not be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, but that we may ever watch and pray and, trusting fully in Thy grace, await with joy the glorious coming of Thy Son, and at last obtain eternal salvation, through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, 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.

Of the three ways in this Advent season we reflect upon our Lord's coming to us, the reading from the Evangelist St. Luke clearly focuses on our Lord's coming on the Last Day. When we hear of the Last Day our first response is fear. We will be judged. No one likes to be judged. And for us poor, miserable sinners there is always a part of us that is considering our sinfulness, our failure to resist temptation on a regular basis, and general lack of holy living that tells our conscience that when the judgment comes, we do not deserve the reward promised to us. When we hear of the judgment on the Last Day, we are sure that we will not be in the crowd with the sheep.

How can we be when our every thought, word and action is contrary to the Law and will of God? How can we be judged worthy when we bear the stain of original sin everywhere we go? When we think about our inability to do what our Lord God would desire us to do, we see that we have failed miserably. We cannot save ourselves based upon what we say, think or do. We need a Savior outside of ourselves Who will fulfill the Law of God perfectly for us and also take upon Himself our punishment. This Savior needs to be both God and man. He needs to be man so that He might fulfill the Law as a man, and He needs to be God so that His fulfilling of the Law and His sacrifice of His innocent life might be for all mankind.

We have this Savior in our Lord + Jesus Christ. He is both God and man, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man born of the Virgin Mary and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. He is the One Who is coming to judge us on the Last Day. This is why we who cling to Him in faith as our Lord and Savior need not fear the coming Last Day, for our Lord + Jesus came to us for this very purpose; for the purpose of saving us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He came to us so that He might bring us to our eternal home.

The Propers for today reflect this great truth; that our Lord is coming to take us to our eternal home. In the Introit we sang, “Behold, surely your salvation is coming” from the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah goes on to say that when the Lord come—our salvation comes—we will have gladness of heart. Also, our Lord + Jesus in His sermon from today’s Gospel says that same thing: “look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” When our Lord comes it is not a time for fear or trembling for those who believe on His Name, it is a time for gladness of heart and rejoicing, for our redemption has come—our Lord has come to take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in Heaven.

Those who do need to fear, however, are the ones who our Lord + Jesus warns us about in the Gospel reading. Those who are weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life. The ones who make no preparations for the Last Day. It comes upon them suddenly and without warning because they have loved their lives in this world. They love their lives so much that they have no use for the life of the world to come. They live their lives as if their life and this world will go on forever. We see this in the people today who continuously cry out for us to “save the planet.” Their Chicken Little cries of the “sky is falling” reveals that they have no thought for life after this earth is destroyed.

Our Lord + Jesus lists the things that will take place before He comes: “signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.” The fear in these people exist because it is not their redemption that draws near, but their judgment. They fear the earth’s destruction because they are not looking for a new Heaven and new Earth that is promised when our Lord comes. They have so built a life in this world, that to have it taken away will destroy them; they have no hope for a life to come.

We fear this day because we know how great our sins are and how much we daily rebel against the Lord God and His will for us. The world fears this day, because all of their false worship will be brought to a final end. Our fear leads us into repentance. When we consider the Last Day—the Day of Judgment—we stop looking at finding salvation in ourselves, and we cling to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ in Whom is salvation; in Whom our redemption rests. He came to redeem us from sin, death and the devil, and through His obedient life and innocent suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross He won for us redemption. He paid the price that we deserved to pay. Our payment for the sins that we commit every day have been paid for by our Lord + Jesus. We cling to Him in faith. Therefore, the Last Day will be a day of rejoicing for us, for we will no longer have to bear the pain and shame of this life.

The world, however, fears the Last Day because they know it is the day of their destruction. They will be destroyed and all their false worship with them. They will be condemned to eternal fire in Hell. But this truth does not wrack them into repentance like it does us. It does not drive them to the Savior—our Lord + Jesus Christ. Instead it further drives them into themselves, to find some way to save themselves by their own working and doing. “Maybe if we give up the use of coal as an energy source, we can eek out a few extra years out of this Earth that is scheduled for destruction.” This Earth is not going to be saved by anything that we do. On account of the sinfulness of this world—on account of our sinfulness—this world is scheduled for destruction. Just like the world was in the flood. Just like Sodom and Gomorrah. Just like the land of Canaan. On account of their false worship and idolatry, and their unwillingness to repent and turn to the Lord God, they were destroyed. This is why the world fears the Last Day, for it brings their destruction.

Not so for those who in repentance, that is, those who in contrition (or sorrow) over their sins, turn in faith to the Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ for their redemption. The Last Day for those of us who believe on our Lord + Jesus; who cling to Him and His works and merits for us; who do not love our lives in this world; who are not weighed down with “carousing, drunkenness, and cares for this life”

but rather cling in faith to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ will be a day of rejoicing. It will be a day of singing, just as St. Paul wrote to the Church of Rome in our Epistle reading for today. When we consider the Last Day, we are considering our final journey into the Promised Land. Our war with the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh will be over. There will be peace in our souls. We “shall beat our swords into plowshares, and our spears into pruning hooks” for our battle with our daily tempters will be over. We will enjoy peace—eternal peace—with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. We will live with our Redeemer for all eternity.

Every time we gather together as the Body of Christ, even if that Body is only two or three gathered in His Name, we get a foretaste of the things to come. Our worship is a shadow and poor facsimile of the worship that we will enjoy in Heaven. In Heaven, all of the saints and angels who surround us now in this packed house of God, who we only see by faith today, will be seen by us in all their glory. Holy Scripture gives us a picture of what this will be like. We will sing, yes, sing the eternal Liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom. Our chanting that we do throughout the service is only a poor facsimile and shadow of the glorious singing that will take place in Heaven. In the midst of this singing, the courts of Heaven will be filled with the perfume of incense—the prayers of the saints—and the smoke of incense will ascend before God.

We will bow down and kneel before the Lord + Jesus and sing, “Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain” as the courts of Heaven are filled with the incense from the golden censors. We will sing for all eternity, for His sacrifice won for us eternal redemption. This is why, my dear friends, we need not fear the Last Day. The Last Day—the Day of Judgment—is the day when our redemption draws near. No longer will we need to daily battle sin and death, and the power of the devil, but we will live with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ and all the saints and angels in Heaven for all eternity. We will sing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom, and we will never know sadness and pain, but will only know joy and gladness.

This is why we keep our eyes open and alert for the signs of our Lord’s coming. For when we see these things beginning to happen, we know that our Lord + Jesus is coming. The signs are all around us today. The Earth is being shaken. Men’s hearts are failing them for fear. Let us pray that their fear leads them into repentance as it has us. Let us pray that they hear the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ; that they turn from their false worship and turn to the true and only Savior of mankind. Rejoice, my dear friends, our redemption draws near. Soon our Lord will come and He will take us to our home in Heaven. And on that Day, we will no longer worship Him as we do today in shadow and poor facsimile, but we will worship Him with all the glory and might of which He is worthy. May the Lord God Almighty bring us safely to that Day. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Cleanse our conscience, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, by the daily visitation of Thy grace, that, when Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, shall come, He may find us fit for His appearing, and ready to meet Him without spot, in the company of all His saints; 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!