

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 24:15-28
November 6th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

As the Lightning Comes

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 Jesus Christ, Who wilt come again in majesty to judge the quick and the dead, and call forth all who sleep in the graves, either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation: we beseech Thee to be gracious unto us, and to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Thee, and, having been found acceptable in Thy sight, may on the last day be raised up to life everlasting, inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and give Thee glory and praise, world without end. Amen.

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

Our Lord + Jesus describes for us today in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew two separate comings. There will be the coming of false Christs and false prophets. There will also be the coming of the Son of Man. One coming will precede the other. False Christs and false prophets will come before the coming—the Parousia—of the Son of Man—the Lord + Jesus Christ—on the Last Day. That false Christs and false prophets exist in the world is our sign that the time for the coming of the Lord + Jesus is quickly approaching.

The antichrists come before the true Christ in order that they may deceive, if possible, even the elect—the believers in the true Christ. False doctrines and false prophecies abound in this world. They come to draw people away from the true teachings of the Christ. How can one tell that a doctrine is false? How can someone suss out a false prophet from a true preacher of the Word of God? A true preacher of the Word of God is one who only points to the Christ and His works. False Christs and false prophets will direct the eyes of their hearers to every fad and fable that the wind can carry.

Certainly, there are false prophets who direct people to their own works; to their own keeping of the Law of God. “Do this and you will live” they say. “Be this kind of person, and you will have joy and happiness” they say. They may even dress such words up with false promises. “If you live this certain way, then you will have earthly rewards” they teach. Salvation is never to be found in our keeping of the Law. Sure, we should keep the Law because that is what faith produces, and is a sign of a living faith dwelling within us, but our keeping of the Law never wins for us salvation. But many people who claim to be Christians are drawn away by such false teachings. This is taught by all the false prophets in both the Papist church and in all the other so-called Reformed churches, who in reality just rebranded the teachings of the Papists, throwing in faith to make it sound different.

But this teaching of salvation based on works is not the only false teaching that the false Christs

and false prophets spread into this world to deceive the many. There are the false teachings of the millennialists who falsely teach, as our Confessions explain, certain Jewish opinions that before the end of the world, the godly will take possession of the earth, and the unbelievers will be suppressed. This false teaching has grown in popularity over the few years due to recent events that these false prophets latch onto and use them as proof of their error. If one is so inclined, they can adduce whatever their heart desires to adduce from current events. "This current event means this is going to happen" they preach.

But one can tell that this is a false teaching because of the litmus test we have already established. Any teaching that takes a person's focus away from the Christ and the comfort that is found in Him is a false teaching. All these "doom and gloom" predictions only serve to scare and frighten the weak. There is no joy or hope to be found in these prophecies. It only causes stress and fear and turns our eyes away from the hope and joy found in the works and merits of the Christ, to the vainglories of this sinful and evil world.

This why our Lord + Jesus warns us about these false Christs and false prophets in today's Gospel reading from St. Matthew. Our Lord says, "See, I have told you beforehand." He warns us that the antichrists will come to damage our faith, and lead us into despair so that we fail to see that our Lord God is in control of all things, and continues to be in control of all things despite the machinations and evil plottings of the world.

Our Lord even provides further proof for us, for He tells us that the false Christs and false prophets will urge people out into the deserts and the inner rooms. In other words, they will urge people to the secret places; to the hidden places. Their teachings cannot stand to be exposed to the light and scrutiny of the multitudes.

The true Christian faith which directs people solely to the works and merits of the Christ surely endures scrutiny, but even though the world and all of the enemies of the Church war against the pure preaching of salvation in the Christ alone, they cannot prevail against it. The Gospel of the Lord + Jesus Christ continues to shine as a beacon on a hill. It continues to draw all those who are weary and heavy laden from the cares and concerns of this world. It continues to call all those who are suffering from sin and the consequences of sin in this world to the true Christ, the Son of Man.

False Christs and false prophets have been coming ever since the Apostles were sent out into the world. False teachings remain the same, even though they may be packaged and dressed up differently with each new generation. False prophets and false Christs will continue to come until the Last Day as a sign to all the faithful that our Lord + Jesus is coming to us again.

The coming of the Son of Man on the Last Day; the coming of our Lord + Jesus, will only occur once. Our Lord tells us that His coming will be as the lightning comes from the east and flashes in the west. In other words, His coming will be quick as lightning. It will not be drawn out over a thousand years. He will come as quickly as lightning comes from east to west. This is why we must ever remain vigilant and watchful against the false Christs and false prophets who desire, like the devil, to lead us away from the true Christ, our Lord + Jesus.

We know how to determine what is false doctrine and what is not. Wherever Christ's works and merits are extolled over against the works righteousness of the false teachers, there is the Christ. Wherever the providence of the Lord God over all things is extolled over against those who spread fear by placing the worries of this world into our own hands, there is the Christ. Wherever Christ is placed before our eyes as the means of our hope and joy, there is the true Christ. As our Lord + Jesus says, "Wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Eagles apparently have very sharp senses when it comes to finding food. It is said that they can sense a dead carcass even from across a sea. The eagles know where to gather. This illustration is referring to us, to all of us who cling in faith to the true Christ. We know where to find the true Christ. We know where to find hope and joy. It is here in this place where the gifts of the Lord are distributed to us through the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments. We know that here in this place we will find the true Christ.

This is why we gather together around the Body of the Christ. We desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation given to us through the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Through this meal, us eagles gather together around the Body of the Christ, and receive forgiveness. But we also receive the strengthening of our faith in order that we might resist the siren songs of the false Christs and false preachers who desire to leave us in doubt and despair. This is why our Lord + Jesus provides for us a place to find comfort and hope in Him and Him alone.

He provides for us a safe haven from the antichrists who have come, until He comes on the Last Day to take us from this vale of tears to our home in Heaven. As the lightning comes, He will come and judge the quick and the dead. Those who have clung to Him in faith will receive the crown of everlasting life, and those who are led astray by false Christs and false prophets will inherit everlasting condemnation in the fires of Hell.

These days of great tribulation meant to drain us of our faith and lead us into despair our Lord + Jesus promises will be shortened. These days are shortened for our sake so that we do not succumb to the lies of the false Christs and false prophets, but that we may remain faithful to the promises found in our Lord's works and merits. He has come to redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He did what we poor sinners are unable to do. He therefore calls us all to listen to His Word, and rejoice that He does all things for our benefit, so that we may live with Him forever in Heaven.

Let us therefore, gather around the Body of the Christ found in this bread, and gather around His shed Blood in the wine, and feast on the salvation given to us through this means of grace. For by this meal, He strengthens us in the one true faith, and comforts us with the hope that we endure this great tribulation and be welcomed into our eternal heavenly home. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same 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!