

First Sunday in Advent/December 2, 2018
Luke 21:25-36/Your Redemption
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church
Deacon Jerry Stobaugh

“...because your redemption is drawing near.”

Doesn't today's gospel reading sound the same as what we've heard over the last couple of weeks? What's going on, we've heard this as the last days, were in a new church year, what is going on?

True we are in the season of Advent which means coming, especially one of high authority or position. Advent is a penitential season where we look back at Jesus' first coming to prepare us for His second coming. So yes, we start the new church year with looking at the end times again.

The signs of the end can sound scary: Signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars; distress of nations; the sea and the waves roaring. Jesus tells us that men's hearts will fail them as they see the terrible signs in the heavens and on the earth.

But your hearts should not fail you. On the contrary, when these things happen, you should look up and lift up your heads. You should not be terrified, but instead you should be filled with joyful excitement. For when the end is coming, your redemption is drawing near. Indeed, your dear Lord Jesus is drawing near.

Jesus says to you today, “Be ready!” Take heed and watch. “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”

Notice how Jesus covers both sides of life; having too much fun and having too much stress. If life distracts you because you are living it up, then that distracts you from the readiness you should have. Likewise, if the troubles of life overwhelm you, then you can also be distracted from keeping watch.

But that is the question. How do you keep watch? How do you stay ready for the Last Day? How are we to “be ready”?

The answer is actually very simple. Be in the Word. For heaven and earth will pass away, says Jesus, but His Words will by no means pass away. The Word is eternal. Therefore, if you are in the Word, and the Word in you, then you are eternal as well. Let the earth and the heavens be shaken and destroyed. You cannot be shaken or destroyed.

For the Word gives you Christ and full forgiveness in His Blood. You who receive His Word in faith and who cling to it as your only hope are ready now. The Lord could return at any time, and you are fully prepared.

That is the concern with the return of the Lord. It could happen at any time. The signs are all in place. There have been signs in the heavens: eclipses, comets, asteroids striking Jupiter, etc. We have seen the tumult of the sea in tsunamis, hurricanes, typhoons over and over. As for distress of nations, when has there not been wars and rumors of wars? The human race is continually in tumult.

But you, you are secure in Christ. He is your Fortress and your Redeemer. You need not fear anything, because He purchased you as His own by dying in your place.

So, you can stand before Christ. He is holy and perfect, and any sinner would not be able to stand in the presence of the glorious Son of Man. But you are cleansed, and you are bought with a price therefore you are able and encouraged to stand before Him.

When you see the terrible things happening in this world, Jesus tells you they point to His coming on the Last Day. When you see natural disasters and man-made tragedies, you know the time gets closer and closer until your dear Lord returns.

If you should lose your life in one of these disasters, you need not fear, for Christ conquered death. Your soul is secure in His hands, the same hands that have holes in them from the nails. Those hands are not crippled and weak however. No, they are the strongest hands of all. For He holds all things in His almighty power. He has already received all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

So, when He returns, He will return on the clouds, with all His angels around Him, and with His power and majestic glory visible to every eye. Your dear Lord, once humble in weakness and the form of a servant, will return to take you home. Take comfort in what the Holy Spirit inspired Saint Paul to write the Philippians, [Phi 2:] “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

So, the end is not a day to fear. Since it is a day of glory for Christ, it will also be a day of glory for you. He will exalt you and clothe you in His majesty, so you will be like Him. That is a good day, not a day to fear.

On that day, the corrupt generations of the earth will pass away. The evil world and its unbelief and persecution will no longer trouble you. The dangers of wicked humanity and its backbiting and poisonous slander and hatefulness will pass away.

These things will also pass away from you. The last sinfulness in you will be gone at last. The last frustrations and pains of life will be a thing of the past. Only joy and perfect love will remain.

This is all because of Christ. If not for Him, then the Last Day would be a day of fear and trembling. But for you, it will be the first of the perfect days of glory that will go on forever. Resurrection and a new earth await. Christ is ready to give them to you.

So be ready. Hear this Word and repent of your sins. Believe in Christ, who gave Himself into death for you. Trust you will share in His Resurrection. For He has done it all for you, and nothing is left for you to fulfill. Christ alone has done it all! Soli Christos!