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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
December 6, 2015  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Malachi 4:1-6, 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Hymns: 70; 56; 74; 399:3,4 (798:1,4)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 17:20-30

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

22 Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Our coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

**INTRO:** There are so many things we don't notice

There are things going on around us all the time that we simply fail to notice. Sometimes we aren't paying attention. Sometimes it is change that is so gradual we don't notice until someone else points it out. Sometimes it is simply a matter of taking things for granted. We just get used to seeing something or someone and we don't take note the kindness that is being done, or the convenience that others have made possible. Sometimes the greatest wonders in our lives are going on at a microscopic level that can't be seen with the naked eye. So it is with the Kingdom of God, or Christ's rule in this world.

You see when we talk about the coming of Christ, His advent into the world, we have three different events that we consider. The first is that which took place in Bethlehem when Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. You might think that anyone with two eyes was able to see what happened that night; a baby was born into the world. If you couldn't see you probably were able to hear Him cry. But that wasn't the case at all. The real wonder of what happened that Christmas night so long ago was invisible to the naked eye, it could only be seen with eyes of faith. It was Christ's coming in the flesh. The Son of God became incarnate and the kingdom of God drew near to a sinful world. So Jesus teaches us in our text that --

**THEME:** The Coming of Christ's Kingdom Is Not Easily Observed; --

at least not with the kind of splendor that lives up to the expectations of man. Jesus taught a lesson regarding --

### **I. The Subtle nature of Christ's Appearing.**

**Luke 17:20-21** "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will

they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

The Pharisees were very prominent figures in Jewish society. Not only did they appear to be the most righteous and godly of the people, they also pined for the return of political prominence and power to the state of Israel. That was their vision of the Kingdom of God. In that they were certainly not alone. That would be the one thing about which the Pharisees and the Sadducees would agree, along with the opinion that this coming of a political kingdom of God would restore glory for the Jewish nation. In their minds kingdoms were something you could see, something you could observe in the making and development. They knew that Jesus was teaching many things about the kingdom of God, so they laid it on the line, demanding to know from Jesus when the kingdom of God was going to appear.

For all their spying and critical listening, they really had missed the point of Jesus’ lessons regarding the kingdom. Jesus had spoken to the people of repentance and spiritual rebirth. In response Jesus presented the truth yet once again for all to hear. The coming of the kingdom was not going to be that kind of a public spectacle, or a movement, or a revolution with political upheaval. It was not going to be centered in Jerusalem or Caesarea, or on top of one of the prominent mountains of Judea.

Jesus’ first lesson concerning the kingdom of God and the Lord’s coming had to do with the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God. It wasn’t going to be as they imagined because the kingdom of God here on earth doesn’t have borders or frontiers or political agendas. It is all a matter of the heart.

Jesus made it clear that this kingdom had everything to do with the power of the gospel entering one’s heart and therefore changing and giving direction to one’s life. The kingdom of God in the here and now, in this temporal, material world is Jesus’ rule in the hearts of those who know and believe in Him as Lord and Savior. Let us emphasize that truth. Jesus comes to us in grace. He comes to us with the kindness and love of God. When Jesus came into this world the kindness and love of God appeared in Jesus’ birth the Lord took charge of our hearts. So Paul wrote to Titus --

**Titus 3:4-7** “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Yes, when the Lord appeared He took charge of our hearts through the working of the Holy Spirit in the regenerating power of the gospel and the washing of baptism. Jesus, who lived and died to be our Savior, is the Lord of our hearts. He rules according to His saving grace. He justified us, declaring us free of all guilt, shame, and condemnation. He rules our hearts according to this grace directing us in the paths of righteousness as we live as heirs of eternal life.

This isn't a political, social, or even intellectual event. This is spiritual. Jesus came into our hearts and made us citizens of His kingdom now and forever. This coming of the kingdom of God's grace portends the coming of the kingdom of Christ's glory. This won't be easy to observe either, but for a strikingly different reason. While the coming of Christ's kingdom of grace was subtle in its spirituality, the Coming of the kingdom of Christ's glory will be sudden. So Jesus taught His disciples about --

## **II. The Sudden Nature of Christ's Second Appearing.**

One won't see it coming, the kingdom of Christ's glory will simply suddenly appear. This lesson Jesus directed to His disciples lest they be deceived, lest **we** be deceived. Trying times lay ahead for the disciples as children of God and as members of the Jewish nation. Difficult trials would befall them for their faith in Jesus. They would endure great and terrible persecutions. Many would still be living in Jerusalem 40 years later when the Roman armies would first surround the city. There were going to be many days when in their desire to see the Lord again, in their hope for His coming to deliver them from this present evil world they would be susceptible to the false ideas and projections concerning the kingdom of God. Jesus warned them not to fall for the lies that

some would promote. The coming of the kingdom of glory would not be limited to one locality on earth that Christian would need to travel there to be included. The coming of Christ's kingdom of glory would be like the lightening that lightens the sky. It will be seen across the horizon. When Jesus comes all will see Him coming. It will be sudden and it will be universal.

There are some who still promote these false and deceptive ideas regarding Jesus' kingdom of Glory. There are some who proclaim that Jesus will rule on this earth for a thousand years after His return in glory. There are some who teach that there will be a special event in which true believers will be taken off the face of the earth and others who are merely professing believers will be left behind with the unbelievers to learn the error of their ways.

Jesus taught a different lesson. He taught His disciples a lesson that remains important for us to retain. Life goes on as long as the world goes round. Life goes on until suddenly it doesn't!

Jesus directed the disciples (and so also us) to recall some important Bible history lessons. In the days of Noah all the normal activities of life went on in the world. People were eating and drinking and getting married and raising children, and doing all the things one has to do as one lives a daily life raising a family. Everyday people got up out of bed and went to work and fed their families **until they didn't**, because suddenly the fountains of the deep were opened and the windows of heaven were opened and the world was engulfed by a great flood and all flesh perished. So shall the coming of the kingdom of Christ's glory be.

Lot lived in Sodom, and witnessed the evil of that city day after day. Lot may have been grieved by the sin of Sodom, but his wife and daughters got along with the people there. Life went on. Lot's daughters found men of Sodom they wished to marry. People went to the market, they ate and drank and did all the things that are part of life in the world. It all went on as normal, **until it didn't**. Everything seemed fine until fire came down from heaven and consumed the city. **And it was sudden!** There was no longer a chance to escape. There was no longer time to repent.

Jesus' lesson is clear for us yet today. Life will continue to go on in this world, **until it doesn't!** The coming of the kingdom of Christ's glory will be sudden. In another lesson Jesus pointed out the signs of the times, that there would be wars and rumors of wars, and many natural calamities as well. Those things remind us not only that this world is very evil, but also that this world is temporary. So we are warned to be on the alert for the Lord's coming. But when it comes to the routines of life in this world, things will keep on going as they have been for thousands of years, until the Lord suddenly appears.

This lesson for the disciples encouraged them to live being ready and well prepared, and hopeful of the Lord's return. God in His grace because He desires that men repent and be saved, has not brought this world to an end yet. Ever since the days of Jesus, or the days Noah, or you could go all the way back to the days of Adam and Eve, the routines of daily have been going on, as well as the special events that come into people's lives. All these things will keep on going, **until they don't**, so we shouldn't be lulled into a spiritual stupor by life's routines, or allow ourselves to be distracted by life's special events, or other activities and recreations. We need to regard every normal day as the day when things may suddenly become not normal at all, when the Lord shall appear.

**Luke 17: 30** "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Consider what that sentence should mean for us. There are many who did not see past the humanity of Jesus. Many still don't. Many deny His divine nature, and so deny salvation in His name. They don't know Jesus' glory. On that day when He suddenly appears the glory and majesty of the Son of Man shall be revealed. What we know about Jesus in our hearts will suddenly appear before our eyes, and before the eyes of all who ever lived in this world. Let's live in anticipation of that day when Christ suddenly appears. By His grace we won't be misled by the routines of life. Because Jesus already rules our hearts we shall watch for the sudden appearing of His kingdom of Glory in which we shall live as citizens of His kingdom forevermore.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.