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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 2, 2018
1st Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 33:14-16, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Hymns: 55; 64; 608; 413:5,6 (73:1-3)

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

Sermon Text: Luke 21: 25-36

²⁵ “And there will be 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; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

³⁴ “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, our Coming Lord, Dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jesus Is Coming!

Yes, this is the first Sunday in Advent and the message of this season leading up to the celebration of Jesus' birth is that announcement that He is coming! We are mindful of the different manners in which Jesus comes to us. We are mindful that He comes to us through His Word and so Jesus enters our hearts. We are mindful that we are preparing for the observance of His incarnation, Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. We also need to be mindful of the fact that even as Jesus was taken up into heaven it was also announced that He would come again visibly, and with great glory.

Now what is the usual response to an announcement that someone is coming? When there is an announcement that a baby is coming, there is almost certainly going to be excitement, joy, and anticipation of the baby's arrival including a lot of preparation. I guess we would have a little more difficulty in grasping a parallel for the wonder of Jesus entering in our hearts through the Word, but we who know Jesus and hold Him dear in our hearts also know the peace that is ours because of the gospel of God's love and forgiveness. That peace can only be ours as Jesus makes His home in our hearts through faith. Finally, how do we respond to the news that someone we know and love is coming to be with us, or in this case, coming so that we can be with Him? I know the anticipation in our house that our daughter is coming home in just another ten or eleven days. And this time it won't be for only a few days of leave before she is gone again. She is coming home to stay! Is that excitement what we all experience as we talk about Jesus' return to this earth? Are we excited? Are we anticipating this event eagerness? Are we ready? Are we preparing? Or is it, Oh yeah, I know, that will be something, but I don't think it will happen while I'm around." May the Spirit use our text to ratchet up that anticipation by a notch or two! Our text announces --

THEME: Christian! Jesus Is Coming.

Christian! Jesus Is Coming --

I. Be Fearless.

We need to put the words of our text, words of Jesus into context. It was Tuesday of Holy week, a couple of days before Jesus would celebrate the Passover for the last time with His disciples and then be taken by His enemies and be crucified. As they observed the temple from the across the Kidron valley the disciples had exclaimed concerning the temple's beauty, and Jesus had responded that this glorious temple would be destroyed so thoroughly that not one stone would be left upon another. The disciples found this rather disconcerting to say the least. They figured Jesus must be talking about the end of the world. They couldn't imagine anything less resulting in the total destruction of the temple.

Jesus' response covered the manner of the temple's destruction, but then went on to far scarier images that would mark the actual end of the world, images presented in our text.

Luke 23:25-28“And there will be 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; ²⁶men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

When the actual end comes the universe will fall apart, with signs in the sun and the moon and the stars. We need to remember that while the scientists have all their theories about how the universe keeps in motion, it is the Lord's power and will that makes it all work. When the end comes the Lord will let go, and things will begin to unravel and then disintegrate. It will be scary with men's hearts failing them for fear! And that won't be the half of it! After these scary things happen, then, then people around the world will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory! That will only add to their terror!

Now what about us Christians? Will we be swept along with the world's fear and panic? You know it happens, and it happens so

easily because of the frailty of our human state. We know better. We are to trust the Lord in all our ways, and yet when the world fears, we also are often afraid. There could be a recession with many people losing their jobs, there could be rumors of war, or earthquakes or great fire storms, or tornadoes or hurricanes. We fear instead of trusting the Lord.

Jesus' word for us, and I mean for us: "*Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.*" (v.28) If these things come to pass while we are here, we, only by the Holy Spirit's power, shall not cower and shake; we shall lift up our heads in joyous expectation because our "*redemption draws near.*" Jesus is coming to claim the purchased possession, His elect which He purchased with His own blood. This is how He shall appear to receive **us** to Himself in heaven, to receive us to glory! **Christian, be fearless!** Be fearless now in the face of the world's oppression and evil; and then be fearless when our Lord returns for it marks the day of our final deliverance.

So in our text Jesus extends this lesson. He says to us:
Christian Jesus Is Coming --

II. Be Confident!

Luke 21: 29 "Then He spoke to them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.' "

How should I draw confidence from this parable? Jesus is telling us that this isn't really all that complicated. We are able to look at the signs of nature and figure out when the different seasons are coming. As the snow melts in the spring we start looking for the crocuses and tulips to break through the ground. It's a sign of spring! Then we watch for the apple blossoms. We don't want them to push too early or we won't get a crop, but when we see the apple blossoms we immediately have a hope of the summer or fall fruit that is to come. We read the signs of the seasons based upon

the knowledge that we have from observing not just nature, but the faithfulness of God in nature.

Now let's apply that lesson to the signs of the end of the world. When we see distress among nations, when we see false prophets abounding and a turning many away from the truth, when we see persecution increasing, when we see nature unraveling, know that all these things are reminding us that this world in which we now live is not forever. Its end is coming with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. No, we don't have a timetable. Our heavenly Father has reserved the knowledge of the actual time of the end for Himself, lest that knowledge be abused, and people don't prepare for their own individual departures. However, the lesson of the faithfulness of God is even more, and I say **more** evident when we check on the faithfulness of God to His Word.

Look at the promises of God from the beginning. Look at His words of promise regarding the Savior. Every word of God is true. Every promise of God regarding Christ's coming, His sufferings, death, His resurrection and ascension have **all** been fulfilled. Can anyone doubt that the Lord will fulfill His promise regarding Jesus coming again in glory? Jesus makes the point that heaven and earth will pass away, but not His Word. Every word of our Lord is true and can be relied upon for faith and life. **Christian, live in this confidence!**

The sceptics of this world scoff, as they already did in the days of the Apostles, seeking to undermine the faith of the Christians. Peter responded:

2 Peter 3:3-9 "Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

⁸But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord holds off His final coming in grace, not weakness or unfaithfulness. The power of His Word holds things together. The power of His Word will bring all things to destruction. The promises of His Word for us and our salvation are sure. Christian, be **confident** in His truth!

Christian! Jesus Is Coming:

III. Be Attentive.

Jesus said:

Luke 21:34-36 “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus understood life with all its demands. Jesus understands what we experience in life. He lived this life, yes, without the sins that plague us, but Jesus faced all the challenges of life that war against your faith. From this experience in life Jesus presents us with these words of exhortation. “Pay attention!” Yes, we know we were already told to pay attention to what is going on in the world. This is directed to us. WE need to pay attention to what is going on in our hearts and in our lives. We must not get sloppy or careless with our spiritual wellbeing. This is extraordinarily easy to allow to happen. Life moves along at a rapid pace and we see how everyone around us deals with life. “Work hard, play harder! Don’t miss out on the fun and good times that life has to offer. Don’t deny yourselves the things that will make you happy, or the pleasures you desire for that matter. If everyone else is already doing it no one will think less of you for doing it. In fact they might think less of you if you don’t.” We get swept along with such nonsense that can have such horrible spiritual implications. And for that matter

the spiritual is too often then neglected, which makes it even easier to live, and react, and set goals and ambitions like the world, which forgets that all these “things” are temporary. Jesus’ warning sounds like it should be directed to young people, but it has its implications for all of us. Take heed to yourselves. Be careful so that living like the world we don’t get caught like the world, not expecting the Lord’s return, unprepared to meet Him. Unprepared to meet Him would mean living in impenitence, and without faith.

Christian, Jesus Is Coming! Be attentive to things spiritual. Be attentive to prayer appropriate for the times in which we live, and in consideration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that at Jesus’ coming you will be found in faith. Pray that you will be counted worthy to escape all the things that will take place on earth at Jesus’ coming. Pray that you may stand before the Son of Man, the eternal God who became incarnate to secure salvation for us.

As we once again enter the Advent season let us hear with great joy that announcement: Christian! Jesus Is Coming! Jesus Is Coming!
Oh, Happy Day!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)