

The Day of the Lord Is Coming

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Three services

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But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds in with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Mark 13:25-27

The Day of the Lord is coming! What a day that will be! Today we observe "Christ the King Sunday" on this, the last Sunday of the church year. We are reminded that Judgment Day is approaching. We will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ is coming to gather his elect. The one who took part in the creation of the world, the one who redeemed and restored the world by his death and resurrection, is coming back to judge the living and the dead.

In our Gospel text, Jesus addresses this. He puts it all in perspective. The created world is temporary. Its days, like our own, are numbered. Everywhere we look supports this. It is not just gray hairs, weak knees, broken bones and failing health. We keep adding problems: identity theft, electric grid vulnerability, a national debt that is out of control, and the rude way people often treat each other. In addition, there are other things happening in our country and worldwide that indicate that something is very, very wrong.

Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem for what would be our Lord's last Passover. In the verses before our text, as they left the temple, the disciples looked around and admired its greatness and beauty. It was quite an achievement and the Jews took great pride in it.

But Jesus decided it was time to teach them something and he said something quite disturbing. He said that the day was coming when not one of the buildings would be intact and not one of the giant stones would be on top of another. The disciples were naturally upset to hear this. They asked when that would happen. Jesus then explained about the destruction of Jerusalem, but he also went on much further. He talked about the times that would lead to the Last Day. We believe that the first part of this prophecy has already been fulfilled, with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of its great temple in 70 AD by the Romans. The last part of it refers to signs just before the "Last Day", and they remain to be fulfilled.

Now there is so much more that could be said about what is going on today, but I don't think that we are best served by spending too much time on that. We have a sure guide that God has left us in our Holy Scriptures, which contains prophecy after prophecy after prophecy which have been fulfilled. We need to pay attention to them. And no matter what happens, God wants us to have a sure hope and focus on his promises. Jesus is coming again! Today we look at the three A's of his Second Coming: how that allures people, how it should alert us, and how it assures us.

The end of the world has always had a certain allure for people. People today tend to respond in a manner similar to the disciples. They want to know when it will take place. That is what seems to fascinate people about the end times. Why is this such an attention-grabber? To the world, it would involve dramatic action and a cataclysmic battle between good and evil. If we knew more, it could be made into a great movie or a multimillion-dollar book series. We already have some of this in the Left Behind series co-authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. They published sixteen Christian novels about the end times and several movies came out of that. The stories includes a rapture in which many people are left behind on earth, a tribulation period, and a terrible persecution of Christians by the anti-Christ. I have read the series and it is interesting, but our church does not see a Scriptural basis for all of the claims made in the series in about the end of the world. However, we are thankful that they believe in Jesus and that the Last Day will be coming.

We believe there will be a "Last Day" and that Jesus will judge the living and the dead. We will see the fulfillment of the promises that God made about Jesus. The end of the world will take place when Jesus comes again-period. In a flash, all people will be gathered before Jesus, including those who have died. Their bodies will be raised to rejoin their souls. We caution people not to listen to those who boldly try to predict when this will take place; because Jesus said, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven." (Matthew 13: 32) While we don't know when the Last Day will come, Jesus does give us some insights.

We are told that we should always be on the alert for Jesus' return. He continues to instruct us in Matthew 13:32-33, "Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake." In this illustration, Jesus is the "man," the Christian church is the home, and we believers are the servants..

We should also keep this in mind. We may be summoned to our heavenly home before that Last Day comes. So that is another reason why we should be alert and be ready to go. It is well to remember the parable spoken by Jesus about the rich fool. (Luke:12:20) God said to the rich fool who was looking forward to a leisurely life with all of his wealth, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" It is just a parable, but the point is clearly made. This was spoken about a person who was laying up great wealth treasure for himself, but he was not rich toward God.

The question we really need to ask ourselves is "Are we paying attention to the signs of the last days?" Our society is drifting away from God. Are you getting caught up in the current, or are you standing up for the faith that was delivered to the saints? Jude tells us how we can do that in verse 20 this morning: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God." Don't walk on this troubled road of life alone. Walk with Jesus, who said, "The one who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) If you walk with him, he will help you to the end.

For those who trust in Jesus, rather than their own thoughts, or some man-made religion, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is something to which we can look forward. It should be wonderfully assuring. We can await his coming with joy. It might not be easy at times, but don't be afraid. Through Jesus Christ, we have become part of God's family. He assures us that our sins have been forgiven because of the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross. We have a new home waiting for us in heaven. Sin, and pain, and death will touch our lives no more.

So respond by living out your life as a child of God. As you have been forgiven, so forgive. As you are loved by God, so share that love with others. As he serves and cares for you, so serve and care for others. As you have received the good news about Christ, share it with others. Live as believers who already belong to eternal life...because...you do...and the Day of the Lord is coming! Amen.