

Fear Not Judgement Day
November 13, 2022

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Yesterday, I went to the Men's Breakfast. The topic was "Surviving the Holidays." And we talked about the upcoming holiday's because life can be complicated, challenging at times, and even difficult. And, even more so when you're a Christian. As a Christian, you can see even more things in your own life that shouldn't be there, and struggle against them. You can look at the world, history, society, and you can see that this world does NOT always honor God or serve His purposes the way that He intended. As a Christian, it can be disappointing, disheartening, and discouraging. And because of it, it would be easy – all too easy – to simply withdraw from the difficulties of your life, play it safe in your discouragement, and shy away from the life God gave to you in the fear of disappointment.

In our Gospel reading, we heard Jesus promise to His disciples that their lives would be hard. And in 70 A.D. Jesus' words of judgment came true. The religious leaders who rejected Him were punished by God through the destruction of the temple, and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. It wouldn't be easy to live through something like that. So, what were the disciples going to do? And more importantly, what are we going to do even though our own lives might not be physically hard or difficult? They're still complicated, challenging and difficult for us.

Our Lord's words today, also encourage us to see past all the trouble before us. They help us to see past all the sorrow and evil in the world. And they help us to see the

day when He will return to judge the living and the dead. When He removes all the sin from our lives and makes everything right. And because it's Jesus, our Lord and Savior, begotten from the Father, who says all these things, we can be confident that God IS going to Rescue and Redeem His people. Because no matter how bad it gets, our world is still in rebellion against God, and simply cannot change His plans... If you recall, God made this world and all that is in it. And even though everything seemed to be moving toward a very, very bad ending with sin, Satan, and the world's victory over Jesus, that became God's greatest triumph!

Jesus, Israel's true king, had come into Jerusalem. It seemed that all the forces were against Him – the chief priests, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, as well as the Roman authorities. And it seemed as if they had won. Jesus was arrested. He was condemned. And after He was whipped and beaten, He was put to death. The only problem was that while He died, He also rose again from the dead. Usually, the dead remain dead. Not with Jesus. He lives! He lives forever. His Words and His promises continue to live on, because He lives!

All our sins – yours and mine – each have the power to take our lives toward a very bad ending. And unfortunately, because of our sins, you and I are also part of the problem, that is going on in this old, rebellious and dying world. Because, when I'm greedy, instead of being a good steward over the things of God, I pretend that I'm Lord and God over all "my" things. And when I back away from loving or forgiving, or when I judge some else in anger- which many of us do from time to time – consciously or not, I'm actually trying to unseat Jesus from

His rightful throne and judgment seat. And even if in our own minds – we judge others by the way they dress, by the way they look, or by the way act and they say or don't say. Our sins only bring us down to eternal death.

Jesus came to change that for you. He takes your sins with Him down into death. He breaks them and leaves them there, that they might not be with you any longer. So that they might not have any control over you and you might remain in God's love and in His life. There's no more reason to fear if you're with Jesus. And because you belong to Him, and in Him, you are free – from sin, death, and the devil.

While the world continues to be out of control – no matter whether it's politics, foreign governments, natural disasters, or the stock market – there's a lot that could frighten us. But despite it all, God is right here providing you His Word. His words give us hope, strength and a better perspective. Not only does He say to you today, I have rescued you and you are mine. As we look to the future this morning, He also says to you, I will rescue you because you are mine! It assures us that we are His as He moves the world toward the day of Redemption.

So what do we do, knowing that the day of Redemption is getting closer? We look forward to that day with confidence in Jesus! Because our God is in control of everything. And we should know that from the first century Jewish leadership, who thought that they were in charge. They had the ability to help Jesus and continue to be the leaders of God's people. But because of their rebellion against Jesus, God allowed a little "judgment day" to come about when He allowed the Romans to come and take

them away...And the same happened to the Romans who thought that they were in charge as well. But looking around today, the Roman Empire has been gone a long, long time ago. All that you can see are the remains of an ancient civilization. Because God is the one who is really in charge. He is moving history toward His future at the end of time, and sometimes we forget that.

Whenever I think of the end of time, I think of God's Word but some people come to mind as well. One is a man by the name of Harold Camping. He was once an American Christian radio broadcaster, evangelist, and was the president of Family Radio that – at its peak - reached more than 150 radio markets throughout the U.S. On a radio broadcast, Camping predicted that Judgment Day would happen on or about September 6, 1994. But it didn't happen. So, he revised the date to September 29 and then to October 2. Even in 2005, he predicted the second coming of Christ to be May 21, 2011, when there would be a rapture and all those being saved would be taken up to heaven on October 21, 2011. But that didn't happen either.

And yet, well-meaning people throughout history have tried to predict when the end will come, and Christ will return. But as St. Matthew shares in chapter 24, verse 36 of his Gospel, "...concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." And all with those predictions, when the end will come and Christ will return have failed.

So what should we do, when we hear of wars or natural disasters come about? They should remind us that this troubled and tired world is moving according to the plan and goal that God has in mind, when Jesus returns in all His

glory. And while people might say or think that they're in charge, in actuality, He's the One who is in control of all the major events that are happening right now. And all this is happening in preparation of the day of His coming, when all things will be put right once again.

Another person I think of when I think about end times, is Rev. Dr. Louis Brighten. He was a professor of mine at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He's gone on to be with our Lord now, but when he wasn't lecturing, he could be found studying scripture or writing about it in his office. In fact, he wrote the Concordia Commentary on Revelations. And when this topic would come in class, He would always stand up straight and say to his students emphatically: Gentlemen (and Ladies – if there was a lady in the room) Fear Not Judgment Day!....

Why? Because while life can be complicated, challenging at times, and even difficult. And when you're a Christian, life can be even more complicated, and you struggle. But as Jesus tells us in His Word, He Will Return, and while we deserve to fall down and bow our heads in shame, He makes us to stand up – forgiven, accepted, and loved. We can look forward to that day with confidence, because God is getting ready to redeem His people. People like you and I. And for that we can give Him thanks and praise!

And now, may that peace which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in that Same Christ Jesus, until that Day when He takes us all home, to be with Him Forever. In Jesus Name, Amen.