

**Are You Ready . . . It's Time
November 27, 2022**

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Are you ready for Christmas? Costco and other stores have had their Christmas merchandise for months. The Black Friday has come and gone. Now that the Church is decorated, and many homes in the surrounding neighborhoods are already decorated, and we should be – if we have not already – finalizing our Christmas plans...the parties to attend, or the cards to put in the mail, because it's time.

It's time. We also heard it from Jesus on this first Sunday in Advent. Because Advent is a time of preparations. And in the Gospel reading, Jesus talks about being ready. But He does so a little more forcefully than what I just said. Because He says, "You...must be ready." He is not talking about His first coming in Bethlehem, or Christmas. He is talking about His second coming at the end of time. Are you ready for that? It has certainly come up before in our readings.

While many of us would say that we're not ready for Christmas, surprisingly some would say that they're "ready" for Christ's return. They do not need more time to worship or to pray because their content with themselves. So, I wonder if you would say that you're ready to meet the Lord when He returns at the end of time, and you stand before the judgment throne?

In our Epistle, St. Paul says that salvation is nearer to us than we think. And now that the last day is closer than it was even last year, He says to us “Wake up...the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:11b-12b). St. Paul goes on to encourage us to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Why? Because as Jesus tells His disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, “You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

That is not an easy thing to do for us. Many of us can outwardly do good things to prepare for Christ’s coming, like decorating and putting up a Christmas tree. But what about inwardly? The Father’s requirement was that we would be perfect. I know that some of you are listening to this and might be thinking, I’m not perfect. Only Jesus is perfect. And you’re right in the sense that Jesus is perfect. But listen to what the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 5, verse 9: “Jesus being made perfect, became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:9b). We’re made perfect through an active faith in Him.

Now, getting back to our Gospel text, Jesus shares with us that in the days of Noah, before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and were unaware about the flood until the flood came and swept them all away. Notice that Jesus did not point out their sinful or evil ways. They were so caught up in their daily lives that they ignored the warnings given by Noah. And like them, especially at this time of the year, we can get so caught in our lives, thinking that we will have plenty of time, that we can ignore the warnings as well.

When we put off our devotional time and focus on all the festivities and celebrations of the season, we often think that we will find the time to get it all in. And when we do, we can miss the point of the advent season. Because Jesus could come today. And we know that concerning that day and hour, no one knows. Jesus will come like a thief in the night, when you least expect Him. So, He tells us to stay awake and keep watch.

There is an old story of 3 apprentice devils who were going to be sent to earth to test their skills. Satan interviewed each of them before allowing them to go forward. The first devil said that he was going to tell people that there is no God. But after hearing it, Satan said, that will not work because everyone knows that there is a God.” The second devil spoke up and said that he was going to, convince people that there is no hell, so they could do whatever they wanted. But Satan rejected his plan too, because he said that everyone knows that there is a hell. Then Satan asked what the third devil had in mind. And the last one said that he would convince people that there is absolutely no hurry to believe and prepare for Christ’s coming. And that he would distract them from different things throughout their whole lives. And after hearing this Satan said to him, “You will win many.”

While we know that as Christians, we should not fear Judgment Day, how should we get ready for the coming Christ? Well, we listen to the Word of God. If only the people in Noah’s day would’ve listen to what Noah had to say things may have been different for them. But today, we can listen to the words of Jesus in Scripture. We can hear about John the Baptist who prepared people for Jesus the first time. If you recall, He told everyone to “Repent, be

baptized, and turn from their sin." That they might see and believe in the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Trusting in Him and in His saving work. And truly believe that He came to live and die for us. That in doing so, we might live the kind of life that we want Jesus to see in us. That is the best way to prepare for Christmas and for Christ's second coming.

Once there was an absent-minded professor who became so absorbed in his work that he forgot the simplest details. One morning his wife said, "Now Henry, remember, we're moving today. Here, I'm putting this note in your pocket. Don't forget." After the day was done, the man went home to his house. He opened the front door, but the house was empty. Troubled by what he saw, he walked out of the house, and sat down on the front steps. Just then a boy came up to him, and the man asked, "Do you know the people who used to live here?" The boy replied, "Sure, Dad, mom send me over here because she knew that you'd forget." We can get so absorbed in "the little things of this world" that we can forget who we are, and whose we are, and where we are going...

It is Advent now, the time for us to focus on getting ready for the coming of Christ. Are you ready? Costco and other stores have had their Christmas merchandise for months. The Black Friday has come and gone. And the Church is decorated, as well as homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. And we should – if we have not already – be finalizing our plans for Christ's coming because...it's time.

In Jesus Name, Amen.