

Pentecost 23 11/17/19
Luke 21:5-36 C

“NOW WHEN THESE THINGS BEGIN TO TAKE PLACE, STRAIGHTEN UP AND RAISE YOUR HEADS, BECAUSE YOUR REDEMPTION IS DRAWING NEAR”.

“Wolf! Wolf!,” the boy cried. You know Aesop’s fable. The shepherd boy watching the village sheep grew bored and decided to play a practical joke, so he shouted, “Wolf! Wolf!” And he did it again and again, until the boy saw a REAL wolf prowling about the flock, so he jumped to his feet and sounded the alarm, “Wolf! Wolf!” But, the villagers thought the shepherd boy was trying to fool them once more, so they ignored him.

Like the boy who cried, “Wolf,” the voices crying that the end is coming have cried “wolf” so often, that we ignore them. Every time a false teacher comes with a false prediction of the end, we have one more reason to believe that the voice crying this is the end of this world is like the boy crying “wolf,” when there is no wolf.

Yet, we dare not ignore **the** voice saying the day of judgment is surely drawing near, for that voice is the voice of the Son of God. Jesus was not giving a false prediction when he warned of things to come. His words proved true in the year 70 AD. The Roman army conquered the city of Jerusalem and many people who heard these words of Jesus saw with their own eyes that not one brick remained standing in that city. So, it will be at the end of the world.

Jesus tells us what to look for. Wars and rumors of wars will continue; natural disasters and famines and epidemics will continue to cause fear and trembling on earth. But, more will happen than what is already plaguing God’s creation. The natural orders will be shaken. The sun, moon, and stars will be affected as the universe as we know it begins

to be come unglued. These are the things Jesus talks about, and the destruction will be so great that entire nations will be perplexed and cower in fear. God's orderly creation will revert toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw His benevolence. God's patience with corrupt and perverse humanity will come to an end, and will turn into anger.

II. Jesus tells us that when these things take place, there is no reason for you to be afraid. "But when these things begin to happen," Jesus says, don't be bent over in fear and fainting, but "straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (v. 28)."

At the birth of his son, John the Baptizer, Zechariah praised God, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people (Lk 1:68)." Blessed be God for He has visited us in His own Son Jesus and Jesus has redeemed us.

"Redeem" means "buy back". A redeemer is a person who rescues another by paying a ransom. The ransom that Jesus paid for your sins was no sum of money, for not all the silver and gold in the world could have rescued you from death and the grave and won heaven for you. No, Jesus redeemed you with His own precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

St. Paul says it this way, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Ga 3:13). And St. Peter says, "you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Pt 1:18-19)."

We have the forgiveness of our sins, life and salvation. We have all

these things now, today, in Christ Jesus who comes to us in His Word, the spoken Word and the visible Word of the Sacraments.

And yet, as strangers here, the consequence of sin remains with us. We still await the perfection of heaven that will come when our souls are delivered from this world. Today, God's creation and our lives continue to suffer the consequences of sin in the world – upheaval, sickness, suffering, and death. We are conceived and born in sin, and our bodies will return to the dust from which they came.

Our redemption – from death and the grave, from all the consequence of sin – is drawing near. The same Jesus who was born of Mary, suffered and died for your sins, and rose from the grave the 3rd day will return on a cloud to redeem you, deliver you, from all the threatening perils of sin.

III. The end of life as we know it on this earth is truly the beginning of eternity with God in heaven. We who lift up our heads in faith for the end of this world “are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (2 Pet 3:13).” In that new creation there will be no more death, no more grief, crying, or pain. There will be no more upheaval or chaos in God's creation or in our lives. There will be only perfection, just as in the Garden, just as God wanted it to be.

That is why we lift up our heads with joy and expectation and not as those who have no hope. We are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven and on the day of our Lord's return, we will claim our place there. Today, as we walk by faith, we give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

“Do not grow weary in doing good,” the Apostle Paul writes in our Epistle (2 Th 3:13). Paul is talking about more than feeling tired at the end of a long day. He is referring to the weariness of heart and soul because

constant struggle against the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh.

Paul wrote today's Epistle to the Thessalonians because they were struggling with this very problem. Paul wrote to encourage them in their faith, but also to correct some of the misunderstandings they had about the 2nd coming of Christ. Yes, Paul wrote, Christ was coming again to deliver them from all the tears of this present age. So, some in the congregation had become lazy and unwilling to work. They were using the return of Christ as an excuse for laziness, which meant that others had to do a lot of work, which left them spiritually worn out. Many of you here today have a pretty good idea how these exhausted, weary and worn Thessalonians felt.

For example, you volunteer your time to teach Sunday School and prayerfully prepare your lesson and then parents do not bother to bring their children to class. You once again find yourself taking an office in the congregation or LWML because no one else is inclined to take it. You care for a spouse whose health is declining or try to raise a rebellious child. You live with a spouse who once spoke the words, "I do," but now doesn't. You have invited your neighbor to church again and again ... and again.

The world does not think your labors wise. The fickleness and weakness of your own flesh will cause you to doubt that you are accomplishing anything at all. Dear Saints of God, Paul's words are words of encouragement and comfort for all who struggle. "Do not stop doing good because you think your labors are futile and wasted," is what Paul is really saying. As you feebly struggle, God sees your labors and your struggles. He is with you. He is your strength and, in Christ, your labor in the Lord is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor 15:58).

Which is very important to remember because Jesus isn't cry wolf when He talks about His return. Jesus words in our Gospel are a warning

to watch and be ready for His return at all times.

The chaos we see in nature around us are signs to us that the end is near and the day of our deliverance grows ever closer. But, we do not lose heart, grow weary, or faint. We rejoice. All the troubles and sorrows we face this day are temporary and the day is coming when it will all be over, for we will be at home forever with the Lord.

To God be the Glory. Amen.