

Advent 2 - Luke 21:25-36

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Luke 21:25–36

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth nations will be in anguish, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the surging waves, 26 people fainting from fear and expectation of the things coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near.”

29 He told them a parable. “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 As soon as they are sprouting leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is actually near. 31 So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Amen I tell you: This generation will not pass away until all these things happen. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 “Watch yourselves or else your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, and that day may come on you suddenly. 35 For it will come like a trap on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Stay alert all the time, praying that you may be able to escape all these things that are going to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Christ’s 2nd Advent: His Coming at the End of the World

In last Sunday’s Gospel, we saw that Christ comes visibly as King in God’s Kingdom, but lovingly, gentle, lowly, and humble as our Savior. We heard that He saved us not because He was mighty, but because He was humble. Today we have quite the different picture: “They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Is this Jesus even the same guy?

Yes, but this is why it is so important to distinguish between Christ’s different Advents, or comings. His First Advent into the world was humble, because He wasn’t seeking to bring peace to the world, but rather to save it. His Second Advent will be in power because at that time the world will be destroyed - however, for us because Christ already came once, even the destruction of the world will be nothing to fear, because we have been saved. We lift up our heads, because our redemption draws near.

Do you know what the last words recorded in Scripture, before the final greeting, in Revelation 22 are? They’re Jesus’ own words: “Yes, I am coming soon.” And this was John’s reply, which should be ours too: “Amen. Yes, come Lord Jesus!”

How many of us can say that from our heart? Or would you say, “Oh, don’t come yet!” So when are you looking for the Messiah to come? He already said He is coming soon, but do you want Him to delay as long as possible, or would you be prepared for him to come now? The purpose of our text today is to show us how to prepare ourselves with a proper attitude.

Over the last three years or so, I’ve been getting into outdoor backpacking. I’d like to maybe take a couple day hike out in the mountains and get some photos. The first step towards getting prepared is to examine what I already have, and if I’m honest, I’ve barely got a start, I’ve got a lot of preparing to do yet.

What about us as Christians? What do we have to make us prepared for Jesus’ Second Coming? We have pastors. We have churches. We have God’s Word, and we have God’s Baptism, Absolution, and Supper. But do we think of them like that? Do we think of them as things that help us prepare? Often, these things don’t seem to be very advantageous for us. In fact, often the opposite: struggle, hardship, and difficulty come along with the gospel. If the gospel is *changed* so that it fits with what people want to hear, *then* it is tolerated.

But otherwise, it happens just as it did with Christ and the Apostles: if you speak correctly about sin, it’s not tolerated, because the world wants to follow its own desires. If you speaks correctly about grace, that’s not tolerated either, because the world also wants to earn heaven. The more faithful we are to the truth, the more we are sure to receive hardship and trouble.

And not just from the world outside us, but from our own mind, from the world in us. Recognizing your sin, your own unworthiness, your own depravity, is not a pleasant thing. What is our wealth, our knowledge, our skills when we consider how little they mean to our eternal life? The world’s glory fades. Our glory fades. All our own honor and righteousness disappears, all our self-satisfaction. Before God only perfect purity can stand, not the wretched rags which we want to hide our inner corruption.

It would be easy to just give in, to let our hearts be weighed down with “carousing, drunkenness, and cares of life.” It would be easy to live like the world is never going to end. To live as if it is going to go on in perpetual wickedness. Or, maybe in our day, it is easier for us to think, “I can change the world and make it better because of my great abilities, if I can just recreate things in

my image, then all will be good,” all the while ignoring God’s truth which says that you, also, are part of the problem. That your sin is as much to blame as anyone else’s.

And then, God tells us “there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, in the stars; and on the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.”

So why would anyone take this tribulation on himself? Why go to church? Why read God’s Word when it shows you your worthlessness and depravity and the terrible things that are coming?

Because the Bible also tells us that this will all end - our struggle, hardship, and difficulty will come to an end. You know, Hollywood gets it all wrong. Whenever Hollywood depicts the end of the world, it’s always a bad thing; like this world is the best thing ever and we have to hold onto it however we can. But when Scripture depicts the end of the world, it means this sin-infested world will end, but we’ll be in a new, perfect one.

And God tells us when this will happen: God tells us when this sin-infected world, ever increasing in wickedness will come to an end, and the new one began for all who believe: Soon.

“When you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.” All of our tribulation will last only for a little while. At Christmastime, we all have had family traditions and customs in the past. I can think back to some customs that my family had years ago, but we don’t do now. And relatively speaking, I haven’t lived through as many Christmases as most people in my family. And then there’s the Christmas song that talks about popping popcorn and sharing “scary ghost stories from Christmases long ago,” - I don’t know who does that anymore.

This is a picture of what our world is like, isn’t it? Our customs come and go. The things we hold so dearly onto as customs will likely be gone in a generation. Jesus promises so too, will all of our trials and tribulations; they will soon be gone too. If we look forward to heaven, just think of the ‘customs’ we’ll have in heaven and think of how silly our customs we have now will

seem. In heaven there will be endless singing, worshipping, and praising God, gathering around the throne of God, completely enveloped by the light and glory of the Lamb.

So Jesus says, "When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads [- that is, look forward to it with joy -] for your redemption draws near."

That's easy to say, but much harder to do. What happens when we do fear? What happens when our own sin and guilt causes worry, doubt, anger, and fear? What happens if we fear death?

But this is why we have a church. This is why we have pastors. This is why we have God's Word, His Baptism, His Absolution, and His Holy Supper. Yes, they don't seem to benefit us at all in our earthly vocations. But our lives here are only temporary. Everything we do will be like an old forgotten custom one day.

And on that Day, when we stand before Him, we will be ready. We will be prepared, because we have been standing around and before Him already. Each and every time we gather around His Means of Grace, we have stood before the same Jesus who is coming to judge the living and the dead.

The work of your pastor is to invite you to Him. My role is to invite you to come to hear the Word as often as you can. My role is to help you remember your Baptism every day. My role is to invite you to the Lord's Table as much as you are able. Because it's not about how much you think you want it, but how much you need it. Here, Christ comes to you, fixes in you His humble dwelling, crowns you with all His mercies, and visits you with His salvation - just like He will do when He comes again.

And, when other's hearts are failing them from fear and the expectation of what is to come, we will look up and lift up our heads in joy. Through Jesus Himself already preparing us by giving us His Word and Sacrament, we will be ready. Unlike my mountain backpacking trip, if I ever get around to it, where I barely have a start on the things that I need, God has prepared us with everything we need for Jesus' final return. Jesus has already come to us. And He has come when we weren't even expecting it.

So when are you looking for Christ to come again? Don't look for or wish Him to delay. But, in faith, look for Him to come soon. Yes, look for Him to come now. "Amen. Yes, come Lord Jesus!"