

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of November 15, 2009

Keep Watch, the Lord is Coming (Matthew 24:37-44)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text is from the Gospel reading:

(Jesus answered:) "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him."

This is the text.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Life has changed. In just the last hundred years, we have gone from the horse and buggy to luxury automobiles, from single propeller airplanes to putting a man on the moon; from slide rules to powerful personal computers. Many things have changed but one thing that has not changed is that pesky not so little problem – the 'S' word; that's sin. Despite all our technological marvels, human nature has the same sins – they have plagued mankind throughout history and they still plague us today.

Our Lord says, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man". What exactly was it like in the times of Noah? That was a long, long time ago. Things were much the same as today. People carried on with everyday things. They ate, they drank and they married. They tried to make life as pleasurable as possible. They focused on the here and now of their present lives but their problem was that for them the Lord did not factor in their lives. They lived for pleasure but not for God.

Dear friends, the same is happening today. These are the end times. The Lord's return is at hand. In today's culture, most people are more concerned with the here and now than with the things to come. But sadly, most people don't see any pressing need to know Jesus. There has been a severe backlash against the church here in Quebec. People have been embittered against church abuses and the tragic result of that is that they are missing out on the Person of Jesus Christ, on knowing Him as their Saviour and their salvation and real hope.

The Bible says the earth was full of violence in Noah's day and it is the same in these end times. We need see it on the news every night. A week and a half ago there was the shooting at Fort Hood where 13 people were killed and 30 others wounded. Here at home in Montreal just last night there was a shooting in Cote des Neiges.

There's unrest. The world is restless. It is a frustrated violent place. Our Lord wants paradise for His people. Christ accomplished this on the cross and He will bring it to fruition when He returns. This is our sure hope. As He promises in Revelation, "Behold, I am coming soon".

And so, He tells us, "Keep watch...you must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect Him". "Be prepared" as the Boy Scout motto says. The people in Noah's day thought judgement was a long way off. They laughed at the thought of a flood. But when the flood waters came and the ark was shut, they realized all too late. Their judgement had come. It will be like this when our Lord Jesus returns. There are many around us everyday on the street, at work, maybe people close to us who are in this vote, people oblivious to the impending judgement and the grace of God available to them right now in Jesus.

Our Heavenly Father says to us today, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near" (Is. 55:6). He wants to commune with us and He comes to us in the Word and Sacraments. We can take refuge in Christ through these His gifts.

We have assurance and peace in Jesus. We know intellectually the faith – we can recite the creed, we can perhaps rhyme off the Lord's Prayer but do we perhaps at times take our faith for granted? Do we truly appreciate what a treasure we have in Christ? Does it affect the way we live? Be prepared – Jesus tells us. He says in Luke 21, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." There's nothing Satan likes more than to get us to focus all our attention on the here and now. He wants to have us think that now is all there is. He wants us to agonize and worry and pursue fleshly pleasures instead of pursuing the pleasure of seeking God. That can weigh us down. They are a trap.

Dear friends, our Lord loves the world and wants everyone to come to repentance and salvation. In His love, He instructed Noah to build the ark so that all who heard might be saved from the judgement to come. The ark was to be the people's shelter from the storm. The ark was to be their refuge. In the same way, our God sent His Son to be our shelter and refuge. Jesus is in this sense is the Ark, the shelter from the storm. Jesus came to earth in the flesh in order to keep the Law for us, to give His life as a sacrifice for our sins, and to rise from the dead so that we will rise on the Last Day. By His works, you are sheltered from the judgement to come. In Him, you can have bold confidence to stand as God's righteous child on the Last Day and enter the everlasting rest prepared for you.

We do not have to be afraid of the Lord's return. In fact, we can look forward to it with joyful anticipation. Jesus has promised, "God did not send His Son to condemn the

world, but to save the world through Him” (Jn. 3:17). He said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (Jn. 10:10). By His work on the cross, Jesus has saved you and in Him, you have forgiveness and everlasting life and joy in paradise. Therefore, we must be self-controlled and alert to hold on to this gift of life. It can easily slip through our fingers if our focus is not where it should be.

Dearly beloved, the Day is surely drawing near. He is coming at a time when we don't expect Him. We are closer now than ever. The end will come in a flash at the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. The Lord will return unexpectedly as a thief. And when He does the time for preparation will be over. Are you ready?

Psalms 27 tells us, “In the day of trouble He will keep me safe in his dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a rock”. Our time is short in this life, perhaps seventy or eighty years or so. He is our shelter everyday. He protects us and guides us as long as we are tuned to His leading in Scripture. He gives our daily bread. And so we can trust Him with utmost confidence when Christ returns. It is the day of salvation, the day we are hoping for. Our Lord's words to us today are an encouragement to persevere in our faith, to press on toward the goal. The end is in sight and it is a glorious blessed end and a wonderful new beginning for the children of God. Friends, keep your eyes fixed on Christ and you will be saved. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.