**Luke 21:5-28 November 13, 2022**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 21 here re-reading these words. “While some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, Jesus said, ‘As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

 Jesus’ disciples ask him, right after these particular words that we just heard, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign that they are about to take place?” As we near the end of the Church Year and Calendar year we can reflect on the signs that have shown themselves of the end times all around us. The world must be coming to an end because…… well, look at the events of this past week. Or even the past few years. The Midterm election results, especially in our State. Or even perhaps the world must be coming to an end because of war and disease. What about inflation? The world must be coming to an end because the average cost of a gallon of milk in the United States is 3.59$. Or, after this past Sunday, the world must be coming to an end, because the Lions actually beat the Packers last week. We make light of the end of the world in this way, It must be the end of the world, Dad picked up his shoes, Mom didn’t lose her keys, the kids actually took out the trash and so on and so forth. The gloom and doom of the signs of the end of the world become commonplace, a new tragedy, a new sign, a new monumental event every week. We have an initial shock and horror, but we move on with our lives. Oh no! It’s the end of the world! Oh well….

But what about the actual signs? What are the real signs of the end of the world? Every year there are earthquakes around the world. We’ve seen hurricanes and other disasters cause pain and destruction in the world around us. And so Jesus says. “There will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” We’ve heard of the persecution of Christians in other countries, and also read about those in our own country who were prosecuted for standing up for their Biblical beliefs. Jesus says. “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name sake…” even going on to say “You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” Families turning against each other, destruction and war, all fulfilled, and all signs. We live in a time of turmoil and unrest, there is anger and hate between different people and groups in public confrontations and personal interactions online. The signs are all around us.

 The signs point us to Christ, that this world is perishing, that everything around us will inevitably come to an end. But sadly, like a preoccupied motorist on the road, who is lost in the music, who is lost in their own thoughts, or is lost in trying as fast as they can to pass and make their way around other vehicles, they don’t see the signs that tell them this is a no pass zone, you are driving too fast, the warning signs that what they are doing is dangerous and will lead to disaster. As I first learned how to drive on highways and make my way between Mequon Wisconsin and Bay City Michigan, I didn’t have a GPS, and while I did have a map I also printed out the directions to make my way. There was no navigation on my phone, I didn’t even have a cell phone then. But one thing I learned as I drove to many different parts of this country where God called me and my family was just to follow the signs. Before an exit if you’re paying attention there are probably 3 or 4 signs. But sadly like the motorist who misses the exit our lives become that way. We become lost in the signs, we flat out ignore them in apathy or laziness, or we’re speeding so fast through our own lives that we don’t even stop for two seconds to recognize that our lives need to change, until it’s too late and we’ve sped on by.

 Being caught up in the signs almost brings about a glee that comes with destruction. A pointing out of all the mistakes of others and taking delight in their suffering. Suddenly the world around us can become a wonderful place despite our sufferings, because we delight in the destruction that is to come for those who openly defy God. We take pleasure in the words of Malachi from our Old Testament lesson, which says. “For behold, the day is coming burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze.” We see those in sin and open rebellion and cackle with delight. “They will get theirs someday” and we delight in the inevitable doom of our fellow man.

 But even this mindset must be called out for what it is. Sin. Sin in behaving in a way that is contrary to God’s nature and also His Word. God’s nature is love and understanding, to take those who are against him and his enemies; the sinners and adversaries that we ourselves are, and make us into his beloved children. And so we show the same love to others that was shown to us in mercy toward them and caring about them, not gloating or finding pleasure in their destruction, but reaching out to them in love and forgiving them as Jesus says not just for the 70th time, but anticipating forgiving them the 70 times 7, for the 490th time and beyond. For God says in Ezekiel 33 “Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”

 Our delight in destruction isn’t our only response but also one of apathy. As we talked about earlier, the signs seem to come every week, a new sign, a new tragedy, a new disaster. The world is ending…so what? Paul speaks of this idleness, or apathy toward the world in our Epistle lesson, going so far as to say “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.” As Christians we aren’t called to “watch the clock” so to speak, as the signs of the end of the world pile up, but instead we are to continue in the work that God has called us to, but with an understanding that it’s not the work that matters, but the creator of all things. We should not grow weary in doing good, or serving in our vocations, in giving of our first fruits to God and His Church, of storing up for our future or the needs of our children. We know the world may end at any time, but that doesn’t give us an excuse to not be involved in it, and serving it as stewards, which is what God has made all of us.

 The ending of the world sadly is also missed completely by us in the mad rush of our lives. The signs are all around us, they point to the theme and words that John the Baptist loudly proclaimed that we soon will hear in the season of Advent. “Repent!” Now is not a time for boasting, now is not a time to devote all of one’s time to the world for the world itself is perishing all around us. There is a balance between service to the world through our vocations, and time that is well spent in study and worship of the Lord our God. Think about how busy you must be to neglect coming to God’s house for even an hour out of the entire week? To find comfort and peace from the world that is swirling all around us. But that’s the excuse isn’t it? There’s no time. I can’t possibly come every Sunday Pastor. I have things to do. My life is so crazy, my kids need a break, I need a break. Something has to give in my whirlwind schedule. And so we lay aside the most important time of the week. We put aside the time that has been given to us by God to rest, relax, and receive, when all we do is lay down the weight of our stress and anxiety before God and say “I confess my sins to You.” We take that important time in our lives, in our week, the time that will reinvigorate, reenergize and refocus, a time to spend with our family to relax and receive and grow together as a family and we put it aside to take up another task, or to have time for ourselves. And so the signs are missed. The world takes precedence; it becomes more important than God. And we fly by the exit, our faith growing weaker, our hope soon to be lost.

 Jesus says. “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the heavens will be shaken.” The terror of the signs, it’s all the world will see when He returns in glory, suddenly everyone will see, for every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The crescendo of the signs will be realized in this next moment, and it isn’t one that should bring us dread or worry, for it is after all the moment that we get to go home. “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” That’s the moment that you will know, without a shadow of a doubt, that the world is coming to an end. And you know what my brothers and sisters in Christ? That’s a good thing. It’s a joyous reality for us Christians because we who have faith in Christ, we who have been bought with His holy blood and united with His death through Holy Baptism, we who have ate and drank his very body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and received the life He won on the cross will go with Him to be where He came from and to the place that has been prepared for us. And we won’t miss the sports, the cars, the food, the house, the life here on Earth in that moment because what we experience will completely wipe any memory of this life from our minds. We will celebrate in that day, for we will be with God forever.

 So until that day, the work continues. Until that day we refrain from gloating at the destruction of the world no matter how much they gloat or persecute the Church or even you personally. We stay connected and plugged in to a world that is perishing recognizing the signs all around us of Christ’s inevitable return. We keep the work that God has given us in perspective, we return to Him what He has blessed us with in money, possessions and time. Precious time that we get to come and receive, that we get to come and recline before Him at His Holy Table, time that is set aside for a specific purpose, for God to bless us with His gifts. The world is ending. The signs are all around us. The biggest sign? The work of Jesus is accomplished. It is Finished. The forgiveness of sins is yours. So give thanks, heed the signs, and serve the Lord in gladness.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.