

Today, on this Last Sunday of the Church Year, we're reminded that Judgment Day is approaching. The day when we'll see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ is coming again to gather His elect from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. The one who created the world, who redeemed and restored the world by His death and resurrection, is coming back to judge the living and the dead in perfect justice.

It's been 2000 years since Jesus promised to return. That makes it seem highly unlikely to people today, including many church-going Christians. But our text gives a very vivid picture. Jesus promises to return in visible glory and with great power. When He does, all will know that Jesus of Nazareth, the one who lived on Earth 2000 years ago is Lord over all, the very Son of God, the Messiah. He took on flesh, carried out a public three-year ministry, was crucified to pay for our sin, and was bodily raised from the dead. He is exalted over all things, and, yes, one day will return for all to see. That's our focus on this Last Sunday of the church year, and it's a very intriguing topic: The Promise of Jesus' Second Coming Allures, Alerts, and Assures Us.

In our text, Jesus puts it all into perspective. The created world is passing away. Its days, like our own, are numbered. Everywhere we look, we get not-so friendly reminders that this world is temporary. Gray hairs, weak joints, muscle pulls. Phones break. Toys fall apart. Cars break down. Sometimes we wonder if we'll even make it through the day.

Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem for what would be Jesus' last Passover. In the verses before our text, as they left the temple, the disciples look around & are amazed at its grandeur. The temple was a beautiful, magnificent architectural achievement. The Jews took great pride in it. It stood as their central place of worship to bring their sacrifices and offer prayers to God. Here God made His dwelling with His people.

Jesus took this opportunity to teach His disciples about the end times. He made the alarming comment that in the not-too-distant future not one of those buildings would be left intact and not one of the giant stones would be on top of another. The disciples were naturally upset about that, so they asked when that would happen. Jesus then told them about the destruction of Jerusalem, and He took this teachable moment a step further. He pointed the disciples ahead to the times that would come before the Last Day.

Like I said last week, the end of the world always has a certain allure for us. And Jesus' disciples respond to His predictions in a very understandable

way. They want to know **when**: When is all this going to take place? That's still what seems to fascinate people the most about the end times. Why have Judgment Day and the end of the world as we know it always been such attention-grabbers? To the world, they represent dramatic action and a cataclysmic battle between good and evil that simply has to be seen (and of course, scripted into a multimillion-dollar book, movie, or Netflix series). To believers, Judgment Day and the end of the world are the fulfillment of the promises of God centered in Jesus, the joyful end when we'll finally be welcomed into the arms of a waiting Savior, who won the victory over sin, death, and the devil.

To both a world that has a thirst to be entertained and to believers who hunger to spend eternity with God, Judgment Day and the end of the world seem so far into the future and so foggy with unclear interpretation that any little detail is as valuable as a road sign when you're lost. There are some things about Judgment Day that we **know**. In a flash, all people will be gathered before Jesus, including those who have died, their bodies raised to rejoin their souls. But there are some things about Judgment Day we **don't** know, especially **when** it will occur.

Throughout history, there have been all kinds of people who predicted when the end of the world would take place. But they've all been totally and terribly wrong in their predictions. What does Jesus say? "Don't believe them." The way He puts it is: "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven" (v 32). While we don't know when the Last Day will come, Jesus does give us some insight.

We know we must always be on the alert for Jesus' return, for He continues, "Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake" (vv 33-34).

Jesus wants us to be alert, on guard, to keep watching for Him to come at any time. He emphasizes this with the story of a man who leaves home and places his servants in charge while he's away. Jesus is the "man," the Church is the "house," and we believers are the "servants." The first point Jesus makes with this picture is that we in the Church are to "be on guard," as He says—for His return at any moment.

The first-century Christians believed Jesus would return in their lifetime. They lived in that hope and expectation. They kept waiting and watching and longing for His appearing. The message to us 21st century Christians is the

same as it was to those in the first century: you don't know when He will return, so always keep ready. Jesus says in Lk 21:34: "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap."

Jesus told His followers what they could understand, and He does the same to us. For us Christians, life is full of trouble **every day** precisely because we **are** Christians. But we can understand this too: "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13). We don't walk on this troubled road alone. Jesus walks with us as we watch and wait. The Holy Spirit will empower His people to make a witness before those who hate and persecute them; they will be given words of proclamation for those who persecute and punish them, murder and martyr them. You can endure to the end because Jesus lived, died, and rose for you.

Are we paying attention to the signs of the last days? Are we going along with the flow of the world, or fighting the good fight of faith? In the Epistle today, Jude directs us to be built up in our most holy faith, keeping ourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Christ is coming! And when He does, you'll see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. For those in faith, we who trust in Christ alone, this is not a terrifying thing, but wonderfully assuring. We can wait for Jesus' coming with **joy** because, as He assures us, He comes with life, light, forgiveness, and hope, and He comes to put sin and death in their eternal places, once and for all.

Be built up, be **assured**, by His words! And stay ready for the Day of the Lord by staying steadfast in His Word. Your Lord Jesus has comfort, promises, gifts, and blessings to pour into your life every day as He cares for you through His powerful Word.

And the Word of the Lord endures **forever** so that **we** can endure until the **end**. So, put on the armor of God. As you have been forgiven, so forgive. As you are loved by God, so share that love with others. As He serves and cares for you, so serve and care for others. As you've received the Good News of salvation in Christ, so share it with others that they, too, may know Him and be with the Savior in heaven.

The Day of the Lord **is** coming. The signs are all around us. We're living in the last days. It won't be easy for you as a believer. But don't be afraid. Christ will soon come again in righteous judgment to take you and all believers in Him to be with Him at His side.

Be assured by His coming! Live as believers who long for the day of His appearing. Pray that day will be here sooner rather than later, the day when there will be no more headaches or heartaches, troubles or trials, tears, fears, strife or sorrow, just God's grace in its fullest measure, eternal life. The Lord's desire for you is that His return would not be a day of terror for you, but triumph in Him.

The one who is coming *has* come so that we might live. As Christians, we live in Him now by faith, and on that Last Day we will be with Him forever in love! That's good news for all who believe. With faith in Christ, there is forgiveness for all of our sins. There is hope when things seem hopeless. There is life after death. There is eternity. With Jesus, we are more than conquerors. That's why Jesus lived, died, and rose for you. So, don't just be *allured*—stay *alert*, be *assured*! Jesus is coming! Amen!