

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

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the seventeenth chapter beginning at the twentieth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

*Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; <sup>21</sup> "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." <sup>22</sup> Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. <sup>23</sup> "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. <sup>24</sup> "For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. <sup>25</sup> "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. <sup>26</sup> "And as it was in the days of*

*Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup> "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. <sup>28</sup> "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup> "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Today is the 3rd Last Sunday of the church year. It is also more commonly known as Last Judgment Sunday. It is one Sunday where we spend time looking at the Last Judgment and what it means for us.

Some people look at the judgment of God as a bad thing. They see the impending coming of God as a time of great fear and trepidation. Others see the coming of God as a time of great joy and an excited time. Still others are completely indifferent to the fact that it will happen and think those who are looking for some end of the world are crazy.

However, according to our Lutheran heritage and our Christian faith, we know the last day is coming. However, we will not be outside with a sandwich board screaming about the “End being nigh!” Rather, when we look at the end of the world, we look at the world around us, we see the devastation and pain and heartache and poverty and violence and SIN, and we know that it is the End Times, and still too often we just go nonchalantly passed it on to our next thing.

Dear friends, it is this numbness, this uncaring that Jesus is warning us about in the text before us today. While there will be great trials in the last days, Jesus warns us to be ready for them

and to not ignore them. For when the final day comes, ***The Son of Man will be revealed!***

The text before us today begins with a question. Now commentators are torn as to the motivation behind the question, but nonetheless it begins with a question, “When is the kingdom of God going to come?” Being asked by the Pharisees one can almost sense a little doubt in their asking. Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, was talking about the Kingdom of God... but, oh boy if the Pharisees could see it. The Pharisees, like most good Jews, were looking for an outward kingdom. They wanted to see a new city and nation arise. They wanted a great ruler who would dominate the earth and put every other person underneath the Jews, who would rule with God. The Pharisees were seeing Jesus, but they were not seeing a great and mighty king, they were not seeing their messiah; instead they were seeing this rather humble man, who had some friends, and who could do some miracles. They did not see God.

And so it is with Noah. Noah was building an ark. Noah was listening to God, but those

around him did not want to hear any of it. We can imagine people coming out to see Noah and his ark project and just laughing away. Mocking Noah for building this big boat, nowhere near the water, and for what? Because Noah heard some voice tell him to? These people did not see the rescuing hand of God in the ark that Noah was building; rather, they saw the delusions of a man.

Noah was building this ark for 120 years. 120 YEARS! He put in more years building an ark than we have had computers. He put in more time building an ark than we have had the internet. Noah spent 120 years building that ark, because he was listening to God and he knew the judgment God was going to bring.

Lot lived in Sodom. When the angels came to take him away from the place so that God could destroy it, Lot was ready to go. However, the city that Lot had lived in, was not ready to let him nor his guests go. The people whom Lot had the opportunity to talk to and work with and possibly evangelize, wanted nothing to do with his God and only cared about themselves.

As Jesus explains for both the time of Noah and of Lot, the people ate, and drank, and married, and were given in marriage, and bought, and sold. They went about and did pretty normal things. The people were just living their lives until suddenly their worlds came to an end. Within one day's time, the 120 years of building and of warning were over and the flood destroyed every living thing on the earth. Within one day's time the years that Lot had spent in Sodom were over and the city was destroyed. Years and years of warning, and the people just went on living their lives. They paid no attention to God and did not care to have His Word as their lives' ambition.

And this fits most of us to a "T". We just go about living our lives. We may not even get involved in the lives of those around us. We just go about eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying, and selling... but we don't stop for God. You see it isn't that those actions in and of themselves are sin, but when they become the focus of your life, when your life is overrun with eating, drinking, buying selling,

and just living... you are forgetting one  
MAJOR thing: God!

As we live lives to ourselves, we forget about our God. When we live lives of numbness to those around us, we forget about our God. When we no longer yearn to hear His Word and listen to Him, then we forget about God.

However, God did not forget about us. God knew that during our life times we would forget Him and walk away from Him... but He never neglected us. God in His wisdom sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world. The first time Jesus came as a baby. He was born in a stable. He was placed in a manger. He grew up to live a life of hurt, and hate, and pain. He was nailed to a cross. He died. He was buried in a sinners' tomb. All because He listened to God. All because He wanted to proclaim the goodness and love of God to all people. Jesus lived, was crucified, and died... because He was God. God was right in the midst of the people, and they paid Him no mind. God was telling the people to repent, and they ignored Him... but still God pursued us. God wants us to be His

faithful children And three days after He died, Jesus Christ rose from the dead to proclaim His victory over death, hell, and satan. And He rose to proclaim to His faithful children, that they too have heaven waiting for them.

And now it is the End Times. The time of the church year when we talk about Jesus' return. His return bodily to this earth so that He can take all of His children to heaven with Him. Look at the words of Christ in our text today, "For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day." This is His forecast as to when we know He has returned. It is not listening to some random preacher tell us, "Look He's coming next Tuesday because a certain math equation says so!" Or "Look He's coming in 2012 because an old calendar says so!" Or "Look He's here now as a little child or in this man who claims to be Jesus again." That is not how Jesus will return. He will return as lightning does... when it goes from one side of the sky to the other. He will return and all people will know it. It will not be a secret. We will not have

to guess... all people will know when Jesus comes back. As Pieper says, "Scripture teaches that, in divine majesty and surrounded by the hosts of His angels, Christ will return visibly, in the sight of all men, for the purpose of the final Judgment of the world and the induction of His Church into eternal glory. Luther: 'He will then not be bedded in the manger, nor ride on an ass, as He did in His first advent, but burst forth from the clouds in great power and glory.'"

Friends, this is what we have to look forward to. We need not look at judgment day as a scary thing, but rather as a day when Christ is coming to take us home. And, friends, we will know when He comes. Through faith in Him, we will not be sent to hell; rather we will be called into His heavenly glory. Whether we die before He appears again or whether we are alive, it does not matter... what matters is that our faith is continually strengthened in Christ so that we are always ready and watching for Him.

And we all know that this is true, for just as Jesus tells us, "The kingdom of God is within you." During this lifetime it is not in some big

show, it is not in hoopla, it is not a visible thing that we can latch onto; rather, the kingdom of heaven is already in you by faith in Jesus Christ. That is what the Pharisees could not grasp and what so many people today cannot grasp, the kingdom of heaven is already within us and on that final day we will stand before God, we will stand with Him in His kingdom. Not the kingdom that we presently have here in faith, but the kingdom that He prepared from the beginning for all of His faithful children to come to and live in with Him.

Dear friends in Christ, do not be dismayed. This life can seem like such a long time as we continue to wait for Christ to return. Whether you have been waiting 90 years or 5 months, it can seem like forever... yet Christ promises us that He will return, He will return for judgment. Be ready for that. Do not be ready to show Him how great a person you are, but rather show Him your love and devotion of Him and of His Word and of His sacraments. Then when we stand before Him on judgment day, Christ will look down on us and tell us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And on that last day,

on that judgment day, we will then get to spend eternity in heaven with Him... because of all that He has done for us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.