

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we know that Your Son Jesus Christ is set to return and we pay it no heed. We know that Christ is coming back and still we ignore Him. We know that You are going to judge the world and still we are lackadaisical; forgive us Lord. For all of our known and unknown sins, forgive us. For the sake of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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 Matthew, the twenty-fourth chapter beginning at the fifteenth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place

" (whoever reads, let him understand),¹⁶ "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.¹⁸ "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.¹⁹ "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!²⁰ "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.²¹ "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.²² "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.²⁴ "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.²⁵ "See, I have told you beforehand.²⁶ "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go

out; or`Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. ²⁷ "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

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

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

The End Times are upon us. Yes, the End of Times are upon us also, but we have now entered into the part of the church year known as the End Times. This is the part of the church year where we begin to truly examine the notion and concept that Jesus Christ will return to this earth in bodily form. He has already come once, and He promises us in texts like this that He will

come again... but we are not always watching and waiting for Him.

And so it was when Jesus spoke these words: people were not watching and waiting. The disciples wanted to know about two things when they spoke to Jesus at this time: When Jerusalem would be destroyed and when the end was, for they thought these two events were one in the same... so Jesus gives them an answer for both questions. The destruction of Jerusalem happened in 70 AD and we see much of that in Jesus' words. The end of the world will come soon and we know that for Jesus tells us. ***"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west"*** so too will be ***The Coming of the Son of Man.***

Whenever we read the Bible, it is always best to have context and the entire story. So, to begin with, what day is it? When is Jesus having this discussion with His disciples?

Well, it is Tuesday, but not just any Tuesday, this is Tuesday of Holy Week. Just before Jesus is set to have a final dinner with His disciples, He spends His time teaching in the Temple area. And on this occasion, Jesus knew His end was coming... but the disciples did not want to think about that.

So, as Jesus is getting ready to leave the Temple, He makes the following comments in Matthew 23, ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*** Then Mark picks up the story in chapter 13, ***“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and***

what buildings are here!’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” Then once they reach the Mount of Olives the disciples ask Him, ***“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*** You see... the disciples thought that the Temple and the area around it would not be destroyed until the end of time; instead, the Temple and its area was destroyed a mere 35 years later. What they thought was so far out in the distant, distant future was actually right on their doorstep. And we are the exact same way.

We have read our Bible. We have heard sermons on this subject. We know that “The End” will come upon us like a thief in the night... but we are not ready for it. Whether we have been waiting 90+ years or 5, we have ignored the words of Christ when it

comes to the end of the world. Christ tells us that it will happen and that we should not be ‘hum-drum’ about it, but we are. We know the world is going to end and still we get into fights with spouses and friends. We know the world is going to end and still we spend our days chasing money and toys. We know that the world is going to end and still we would rather give time to hobbies and jobs. We know the world is going to end and we treat it like any other day... because, to us like the disciples, we think it is so far off and we feel that we have so much time.

As Koren says, ***“That is probably the thought that goes through many a relived heart. ‘These things may certainly be worth thinking about. We won’t deny that. But it isn’t exactly a thing that pertains to us. The destruction of Jerusalem! That is now 2,000 years ago. And the end of the world - that’s a long way off. It certainly won’t come in our day. But what danger is there,***

then, that threatens us?’ My dear friends, just exactly such thoughts and the safety and security that they bring with them are the danger that threatens us.” And so it is, we spend out days focused on our wardrobe or our spouse or our job or our favorite team or politician... but why don’t we spend it focused on Christ and on His return. The disciples were focused on the beautiful buildings and the permanency of such a large structure... they were not focused on the permanency and largeness of God. And we focus on the permanency of a paycheck, of a hobby, of a spouse, of a car, of a house... we focus on the permanency of purely impermanent things and we neglect God in the process. And so Jesus has a message for us.

The End is Coming and with it comes death, destruction, and mayhem. The people of the world will cry out, “Look a new Christ is out in the desert!” “Look, He is over there!” “No

the new Christ is my new phone, which pulls me away from God.” “No the new Christ is my new spouse who does not allow me to worship!” “No the new Christ is my job which makes me work on the day of worship!” No the new Christ is any and all transitory things that pull our attention away from God and His true worship... and Christ warns us to stay away from those things and do not give in to them, but we don't listen.

And still, praise be to God that He has not left us in such a wretched estate. For left to us, we would follow after a new Christ every day and we would walk further and further down the road to hell. Rather, for the sake of the elect, for you, for me, for all of His chosen and redeemed children, God has shortened the days of the End. He has made them tolerable days, so that we will not give in to the world though we must live in it. God has been looking out for us... and especially during these End Times.

For it was at the End of Jesus' time on earth that He paid the ultimate price for us: He gave His life for us. Yes, throughout His life Jesus lived perfectly and when the time came, Jesus gave up His life, His perfect and holy life, and He gave it up on the cross. He could've condemned us and walked away as we so often do, but He hung there. He could've just gone back to heaven and done away with such a wicked generation, but He suffered and died for us. He could have given up on us, but instead He loved us and He bore our punishment and He won for us salvation.

And now He gives you that salvation. Through His word where He promises that those who believe in Him will have life everlasting and will never die. Through His baptism in which He promises you the forgiveness of your sin and an impartation of the Holy Spirit and faith into your heart.

Through His body and blood where He gives to you the forgiveness of all of your sins, not through works, but through faith. Jesus gives you salvation, full and free, through faith in Him and in all that He has done.

Now in our text and in countless other places Jesus tells us to be ready for His coming again. ***"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*** ***"Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*** ***"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*** And is that hour today? tomorrow? next week? We do not know... but it does not lessen our need to be and stay ready. As Koren warns, ***"While we daily carry on the busy pursuits of our earthly calling, we are tempted to accommodate ourselves to this world as though we were to continue here."*** But thanks be to God that

we will not continue here. Yes, during our lives we will continue on this earth, but this earth is merely a layover on our journey home. This earth is merely a short stop on the journey to our heavenly home, where Christ is waiting for us and where God promises to wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Yes, friends, I admit it, this is the same message that you hear from me week after week. We have sinned, Christ died for our sins, and now through faith in Him we have heaven... but is there a better message I could proclaim to you? And as Koren reminds us, ***"so also we servants of the Word have no new message to bring, but we all need perpetually to hear the old message anew for our awakening and strengthening."*** We need to hear the 'old message' of Christ crucified for our sins so that we will always be ready for the day that He will appear again.

Dear friends, thanks be to God. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ, with the beginning of End Times, I pray that we can always be looking forward to the time that Christ comes back. Let us not look for new and fancy christs, for they will lead us away from the one true God and Savior of our souls; rather, let us lean on Jesus, let us trust in Jesus, let us draw all of our strength from Christ and His sacraments, and then we can hear that same 'old message' again and again, "Christ died for your sins and now through faith you have salvation full and free."

Thanks be to God for giving me warning about the coming of His Son. Thanks be to God for cutting the time short for His elect so that we are able to bear these End Times. And thanks be to God for allowing us to realize that sooner rather than later we will witness *The Coming of the Son of Man*.