

25th Sunday after Pentecost
“Preparation for the Day of the Lord!”
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)
November 19, 2023
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the 25th Sunday after Pentecost is from our epistle reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

So far the text...

I was recently told the true story of a young boy who was training with his coach. The coach thought that the boy was not moving quick enough and so he jokingly said, “What are you waiting for? Jesus isn’t coming.” And that caused the boy to pause, look at his coach with all seriousness, and say, “Yes, He is. The Bible says so!” And the coach realized how flippant he had been. And those words coming from a young boy hit home in his heart, and he pondered them anew.

Yes, here the student taught the master the truth of God’s word. The student used his God-given talents of the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation to be a strong witness for Jesus who loved him. And out of love, the young boy wanted his coach to know that – yes, Jesus is coming and you too need to be ready...because Jesus can come at any time ...when you least expect it – like a thief in the night!

Paul tells the Thessalonian brethren that he doesn’t have to write them concerning the times and seasons because they know that Jesus is coming. The day of the Lord, His judgment day will come when we least expect it. The Thessalonians were taught this. We’ve been taught this. We confess it in the creeds as we did today in the Nicene Creed.

“And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.”

But Paul then writes the Thessalonians about the very thing that he told them that they already knew – the coming of the Day of the Lord – because they and we need to be continually reminded and focused to be faithful to God.

Paul is clear that there are two types of people in this world – those who are ready for the Lord’s coming and those who are not. Those for whom it will be a dreadful day and those for whom it will be a day of extreme happiness!

“you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”

Last week we heard we heard in the parable that there were two types of bridesmaids waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom – Jesus. Those who had faith lit lamps with plenty of oil from receiving God’s Word and Sacraments and those who had no light in their lamps because they had rejected God’s Word and Sacraments and their faith was dead. Light and darkness.

Those who had no oil in their lamps were left outside the heavenly banquet hall pounding on the door – “Let us in! Let us in!” And Jesus sadly says, “I know you not”.

And today, we heard in next parable that Jesus told in Matthew 25, the parable of the talents, that there are, again, types of people in the world. Those who are called “good and faithful servants” and those who are “wicked and lazy servants”. Again, - those with faith who show forth their faith using their talents, and those without faith – who have nothing to show from the talent God gave them because it had no value. It was buried and considered dead and there was no loving relationship of a son to a father, but the opposite.

The people who bury their talent create their own conception of who God is, or whether He even exists. **“Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.”**

As we heard last week, Paul told the Thessalonians that he did not want them to be unknowing, agnostics **“lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”**

When people go through extreme hardships in this life, it often becomes very evident whether there is faith or not in their hearts by how they react. A well-known soccer player on the United States soccer team, Megan Rapinoe, fell down and suffered a torn Achilles tendon in her last match before her retirement.

“I’m not a religious person or anything and if there was a god, like, this is proof that there isn’t,”

But the truth is – there is a God, a patient loving God, who wants all people to be saved, who wants all people to repent and trust in Him. We pray that this is Megan’s moment that she falls on His mercy and forgiveness!

II Peter 3, tells us these words about the True Living God... **“beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”**

Why doesn’t God come already and judge the world? What’s taking so long? Well, God isn’t constrained by time. He’s eternal. 1000 years is like a day to Him. We on the other hand live within the boundaries of time. We set our clocks forward and backward to coordinate with the length of days. We get all the announcements of early access to the Black Friday sales that are already happening now. And if it’s something that is deemed very valuable, people will spend the night waiting in line for the store to open to run and get it.

But what is most valuable, what is eternal, is our soul. And God wants our souls to be joined to a new perfect body and spend eternity with Him. For that reason, God graciously gives us faith in Him.

Peter repeats what Paul said to the Thessalonians, adding what will happen to all the earth and all the Black Friday sales on the last day.

“10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

We'll be looking more closely at this chapter in a few weeks on the 2nd Sunday of Advent. As cataclysmic as this final purifying of the world will be, Paul reassures us of God's strong love for us in our epistle reading.

“9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

These words from God are the words that give us hope! Read them often. They're on the bulletin cover. Memorize them. Be strengthened by them daily.

For God's wrath doesn't await His sons and daughters on the last day. His wrath has already been poured out on His Son Jesus, who died for us! Jesus took our punishment ...for us! He paid our debt of sin...for us! And so there is no wrath that awaits for us, but our salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this salvation we receive ...we obtain... it is our possession right now through His Word and Sacraments. God graciously gives us the breastplate of faith through the hearing of His Word. Today, baby Jade receives her salvation through the life-giving water of her baptism. She receives the gift of her inheritance of eternal life!

And as she grows, God has many more gifts to give her! She will prepare to receive the very body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper for her forgiveness. Yes, God gives us this means of grace to keep us strong in the faith as we await His 2nd coming!

And where God gives faith, He graciously gives each person talents...spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological gifts that God gives to His people. Each talent in Roman times was worth a very large sum of money...about 15 years of labor. 2 talents would be about 30 years of service to the Lord. 5 talents would be about 75 years of service to the Lord.

As we know from 1 Corinthians 12: **“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”**

God gives different talents to each person because He has a plan for the use of them all. Jade has different talents that God will use according to His good will. It's not about how many, for God says **“you have been faithful over a few things”** It's about being faithful to the gifts that God has given you. It's about being a faithful witness of your faith and using your gifts for the building up of God's people and the reaching out to unsaved people!

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ (Matthew 25:23)

Christ's goodness, His righteousness imputed to me through faith in Him is the reason that God says well done, good and faithful servant. Now, guess what? I will make you a ruler over many things! God will give to you, faithful son and daughter of the King, many things in heaven that we cannot begin to fathom. Enter into the joy of your Lord!

So that, **“that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”** There is never a moment when we are without God. Whether we tear our Achilles or witness our faith to a coach, or a coworker, or a friend, God gives us faith in Him that Jesus died and rose for us...And He truly is coming again!

Repetition is good. We need to always be comforted with God's promises! So, Paul tells the Thessalonians and all of us once again...

“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)