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

**Stand Before the Son of Man**

**Luke 21:25‑36**

Populus Zion – 2nd Sunday in Advent

12.6.2020

*“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 powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*

Interestingly, there are some who would claim to be agnostic, they are not sure if there is a god, but they certainly do not believe in God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – it is they who must have some knowledge of this passage of Scripture, because they come up with some horrifying ideas that appear at first glance to reflect this passage.

They teach, “Global warming is coming, the earth will be destroyed, and it is mankind that is killing it!” If you have paid attention, that is the rhetoric of some who take a dim view of human life, and see the planet as “mother earth,” their god, and it is our task to save it.

Wow! How different is that from our God, who came to save us?

Of course, there are many who would like to do a reboot of 2020! I get it! I would love to reboot portions of this year as well, but some of 2020 was great. But how many see the whole COVID pandemic as evidence of the end of the world? Some add the raging fires, the strange oceanic events and weather patterns, and point at these events and this text and claim this is evidence that the end is coming.

Many claiming to be Christians are terrified of the coming of Christ. They see it as the end of this world, and it scares them. Why?

Yes, I know the words of this text. Jesus closes this text to us saying, *“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. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

There is fear in our hearts when we consider standing before the Son of Man, He is after all, coming on that day in “judgement.” With this thought, the earlier words of our text come to mind, “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.”

What are your hearts weighed down with? Dissipation? Most people do not even know what that is, but simply put, it is the squandering of money on things that we ***want*** but which are truly unnecessary. Drunkenness is self-explanatory.

Finally, Jesus mentions the cares of this life as something that can weigh down our hearts leaving that day to come upon us suddenly like a trap.

What kind of cares weigh us down? Each of us has to ask that question of ourselves and answer it. Here is a simple way to make that inquiry. What things in my life keep me from having the things of God first in my life? Simplify it more?

What do I fear more than God?

What do I love more than God?

What do I trust more than God?

Sometimes those things overlap? And in this time of COVID, that overlap can be great – we love the things of this life so much that we fear for our physical health. Or maybe we fear more for our health more than we trust God?

We do not even need to discuss this pandemic to see how the cares of this life can be problematic. Worldly things are a constant distraction to us, they easily take our eyes from Christ.

How easy are we distracted from God? Daily devotions are sidetracked because of a favorite TV show, too much work to do, or thinking it is not fun?

We can even lose focus when we are here in God’s house, in the midst of the Divine Service… Do you go through the motions, speaking or singing the words of our liturgy, but thinking little about what they mean? Maybe during the sermon your mind wanders, something pastor said got you thinking in an entirely different direction? Does doubt creep in as you take into your mouth the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, is it truly the very flesh and blood of Christ?

I thank God for COVID! Yes, you heard me correctly, I thank God for it!

You are probably wondering why? Because it has forced me to greater faith and trust in God. It requires either fear of it or trust of God. You are here today because you fear, love, and trust God – even in the face of the tribulations, trials, and temptations in the world – even in the face of COVID.

We will stand before the Son of Man on the last day, is that something to fear? No! Christ declares that His Word will never pass away.

It is true that we have not always feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. Thanks be to God that Christ did fear, love, and trust in His Father above all things. He did so in our flesh and in our stead.

Now consider Jesus’ declaration that His Word would never pass away. This is your hope and your strength. The promises Jesus has given to you that you are His children, that heaven is your home and that you are simply strangers here in this world. These are things which give you confidence and hope.

Dear friends in Christ, the very Word of God in our flesh, you have sure hope.

Advent always means that Christmas is around the corner. When you think about Christmas you think about a manger, the first cradle in which our Lord and Savior slept. Scripture and the Sacrament are the cradle which brings us Christ.

When you hold the Bible and read it, when you hear it read and preached, you gaze into the face of Christ and behold the love of God. When you kneel at the Lord’s Table, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of bread and wine are the very Body and Blood of Christ.

Christ, the Word of the Lord, endures forever. In the Word of Christ, God gives you His peace and the hope which draws you onward to life's end.

Christ comes as the very Word of God present in word and sacrament, and in Him you are given the peace and the strength to endure the trials of this life's journey. In the Word of God – in Christ – your redemption draws near. Jesus Himself tells us, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Jesus has overcome the powers of darkness in this world – sin, death and the devil. He has defeated them through His perfect life sacrificed unto death and resurrection. In His victory, you need not fear the things of this world any longer. When He returns, Jesus will put an end to the things of this world.

Heaven and earth shall pass away my friends, but the Word of Christ will never pass away. God's Word is eternal, He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and therefore our unshakable confidence. Joyfully dwell daily in His Word and you will be stand with joy and confidence before the Son of Man on the last day in expectant hope for a glorious, eternal future. Amen.