***God’s Christ Comes Enfleshed***

**Last Day – Righteous Judge**

12.23.2020

Mid-week Advent 4 – 2020

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

Here we are at the last Wednesday in Advent with tomorrow beings Christmas Eve. At this point in time, many people already have already turned their minds toward what is going to take place tomorrow and Friday. But is it the birth of our Savior that is the priority causing such excitement? Or is it other things?

On this day, many are worried about the last minute plans to make sure everything is ready for Christmas. Some are finding those last presents which are hidden so well it was forgotten where they were put. So, in the course of such a search, found a gift or two that had been intended as a gift for Christmas 2019. Some are concerned that the ham or turkey will thaw in time. Some are scrambling, trying to get those last few cookies baked.

Today we are taking a breath to stop and focus on Jesus, the wonderful opportunity granted for one last mid-week Advent service, gathered together for God’s Word and the Sacrament again. What a blessed gift!

On our first Wednesday in Advent, we considered Adam being created in the image of God. That image was perfect, holy, without sin. God’s image was also, and importantly, human flesh. Adam's flesh was the image as a prophecy, a type so to speak, of God enfleshed in the person of Jesus.

In our own flesh, we bear that image of God. This fleshly image Christ came to redeem and perfect. His perfect life in our flesh He sacrificed unto death to pay for our sins and was raised again to show us our fleshly future.

In our second week we looked at the incarnation of God, that God took on our flesh. He tabernacled, made his dwelling, in the womb of the Virgin named Mary. His incarnation was extremely important, for no man, because of sinful flesh, could save himself. It took God in human flesh to redeem, to buy back, to purchase mankind from sin and death. God was incarnate – enfleshed – to grant salvation, and to return to man the hope of eternal life eternal life – a hope revealed to us in His own resurrected flesh.

In the third week of Advent, we rejoiced in the revelation that God enfleshed is still coming to us in unique and special ways. These means are designed by God with the express purpose and intent of caring not just for our spiritual well-being but feeding us in our flesh --- caring for the whole person body and soul. Christ is the very Word of God who comes to us when the word of Christ is spoken – in the absolution and the preached word. It is Christ's very flesh that we eat when we come to the table He sets. Is a very blood of Christ we drink at that same table. This holy food feeds and nourishes us in body and soul unto forgiveness, salvation, eternal life. In these “Means of God’s grace,” He is strengthening our faith to live in these bodies...in this life, in love toward Him and in service to our neighbor.

This brings us to today. You have read the sermon title: Righteous Judge. This title immediately brings to mind thoughts of our sinfulness. It causes us to pause and consider that we will have to stand before God on judgment Day, and that thought invokes in us fear and terror.

However, does fear and terror sound like the attitude we could be having when we consider what we've heard the last three weeks? Does fear and terror sound like the posture of those who will, in the next couple days, celebrate the birth of their Savior who is Christ the Lord?

Yes, in Adam we were given the fleshly image of God.

Yes, we are to live in holiness and righteousness, loving God, and loving our neighbor in selfless service to them.

And yes, we failed to do this. We could blame Adam for the fall, for the sinful flesh we inherited, but what we do in this flesh is also sinful.

So there is every reason that we **could** look with terror on that last day. An honest assessment of our sinfulness ***could*** fill us with fear and dread of what we deserve and it **could** overwhelm us.

But you have been hearing God’s Word address this in this special Advent series, we know the love of God toward us. We do have His image in our flesh, God gave it to us knowing what we would do in it, how we would dirty it, spoil and ruin it. We know that His own Son, in our own flesh, redeemed that image with His innocent suffering and death and His glorious Resurrection. And we know that He still comes to us by His means of Grace in order to feed and nourish us in this flesh, granting us forgiveness, life, and salvation.

It is in His continual coming to us in these means, that He is preparing us for that last day, so we do not need to face it with fear and terror, but in hope.

We know it is true, just is Malachi foretold: “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.” We know that “the day which is coming shall burn them up,”

We know our sinfulness, that we have done wickedly. Yes, we deserve God's wrath for what we have done with and in His image that He graciously gave us.

But you also know what else God said through that same prophet, you heard it read to you only moments ago... “But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” (vv. 2)

That Son of Righteousness is Christ. He is the righteous judge. But He comes in terror only for the unrighteous, that is, the unbeliever.

Did you hear the Word of Christ in our Gospel lesson?

Jesus declared, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn. 6:37-40)

Those who believe in the Son will be raised up on the last day. Those who have had their faith fed and nourished in the forgiveness of sins Christ purchased and delivered to them throughout their lives.

Yes, not all believe. Some reject the Word of Christ. Some walk away. You heard what the Gospel proclaimed.

The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” (vv. 41-42)

You also know how Jesus answered them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” (vv. 43-47)

Baptized into Christ your faith was begun. You died with Christ, and were born again, raised up in Christ.

Hearing the Word of Christ, your faith was nourished.

Gathering at the table Christ sets, you eat of His body – drink of His blood and your faith is fed.

In these means, you are built up in Christ. You already have everlasting life.

Dearly beloved of God, when Christ returns as Righteous Judge, our hope is exactly as our Epistle declares:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

We look forward with great joy to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. We look forward with joy to that celebration because we know what He has accomplished for us and the hope it gives to us today – and for that last day.

When Christ comes again in glory as Righteous Judge, we will be raised and renewed. We will be granted a return to that image which is our inheritance in Christ. His appearance in glory is our transfiguration – our perfection and glory revealed on that day in our own flesh. On that day His righteousness will transform our bodies to be like unto His glorious body. What a wonderful day it will be!

Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.