

Last Sunday of the Church Year
“God’s servants in charge” (Mark 13:34)
November 24, 2024
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 Last Sunday of the Church Year is from our Gospel reading, Mark 13:34.

“It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.”

So far the text...

We made it! Thanks be to God! Another year of His grace and mercy! Yes, today marks the Last Sunday of the Church Year. It’s a big deal. Sure, the big ball doesn’t drop in New York for another month, but for God’s church, His servants, we count the days and years differently. Next Sunday is the beginning of a New Year, the first Sunday in Advent.

Firsts and Lasts - year after year, God’s people, His servants, you and me, hear God’s enduring Word that tells us to watch and be ready. For Jesus is coming! Yesterday, the group from Concordia visited and sang with one of our church members, Mildred, who has now enjoyed 96 Last Sundays of the Church Year! And they also visited with some veterans who sang praises to God who loved them so much that He fought the battle of battles on the cross for our salvation!

Yes, we don’t know when Jesus, the Master of the house is coming back from a far country – heaven itself! But we do know He’s coming!

2 Peter 3:8

But, 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.

And you know what? Before the Master of the house left, He put His servants in charge of the house. He gave them authority and each one has his or her own work to do. And He told the doorkeeper to be on alert and be ready for when He comes back. The truth is,

Jesus is talking to all of His servants to be watchful doorkeepers – all of us- for He says in our reading:

“35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Isn't that amazing? ...That God has put you in authority in His house – His church? What a great confidence God has in His people! What a great confidence God has in you!

You know most store managers don't get customers coming up to them and complimenting them for how well the store is being run. Only when there is a complaint do people come looking for the store manager. “Who's in charge here? I want to speak to the manager!”

Again, it's amazing that God would assign each of us imperfect, fallible, sinners special tasks to do in His most precious house until the Master returns. Are complaints raised against each of us for our faults and failings? For sure! But again we remember that we live by the grace and mercy of God who forgives us daily and strengthens us anew to serve Him!

1 Corinthians 12 tells us:

“12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

We see how this is possible! For to be a servant in God's house means that you were first made a member of Christ through faith – baptized into His body – drinking of the same Spirit. And the same Spirit washes each servant of his or her sins daily. It doesn't matter what nationality one is. The same Spirit imparts His gift of salvation to each servant through the washing of regeneration – baptism! The same Spirit gives gifts to each one according to what He knows is needed. Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 12.

“17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”

Conner, who led the children’s message, is going to be graduating in two weeks to be a DCE, Director of Christian Education. Tammy is studying to be a nurse. What a joy it was yesterday to hear them tell others God’s Word and pray with different people. The same Spirit is working strongly in their lives just like ours.

Again, how is this all possible? Well, our text gives us the big picture doesn’t it? The Master went away on a trip. What does that mean? It means that Jesus accomplished everything He had to do for all people. Jesus took upon Himself the work that none of us could do. He became a true Man, God in the flesh, and took upon Himself the sins of the world. Jesus is speaking these words to His disciples three days before He would die on Mount Calvary.

Listen to our epistle reading again from Revelation 1:

“4 Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”

This greeting of grace and peace comes from the Triune God, the Father everlasting, the Holy Spirit before the throne, and the Son, Jesus Christ who died but rose again – the firstborn from the dead. Jesus loved us and washed from our sins in His own blood!!!!

That’s why Jesus can put us in charge of His house, for we are righteous before His eyes through His shed blood. Listen to how Jesus next describes His servants:

“6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”

Wow! Each of us has been given authority to do His Kingdom work and lift up our prayers to Him as His priests.

Right before Jesus went away on His trip to a far away land, He said these words:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth...” Jesus has won the battle over the devil, over the sinful world and over all sin. He rules with all authority. So what does He do next? He sends His church out with His authority. He puts us in charge.

“19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

We see that Jesus, though He is not bodily present with us, is with us always. He is watching over His house. The Holy Spirit is imparting His seven-fold gifts to His servants. To do what? Baptize and teach and observe everything He has commanded us! Jesus wants all people to be saved and He is patient to give His church the authority and opportunity to share the Gospel of salvation. Again, in 2 Peter 3 we hear these words:

“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.”

God is not slack and neither should His servants be. The task is too important for the day is coming when the world will end. **“31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”**

On this Last Sunday of the Church Year, we are reminded again that the last day is coming. No one knows, not even the angels. It will come as a thief in the night. And when that day comes, there will be a separation of the sheep and the goats. God’s forgiven sheep will enter a new heaven and new earth. The unrepentant, unbelieving goats will suffer eternally in hell.

What does 2 Peter tell us?

“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. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with

fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

We live with a resounding “Nevertheless”. Though all this will happen we need not fear. No the opposite is true. We look forward to this day!

“14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;”

In peace and without spot, through the hearing of His Word that endures, through the receiving of His body and blood that forgives our sins, through our baptism that makes us without spot and blameless!

Who’s in charge? God is! He’s in charge of His church and He has a great plan for each of us to serve Him as we await His knocking at the door!

So the final book of the Bible in Revelation tells all us:

“12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” 14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”

“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

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