

✠ Luke 21:25-36 ✠

We Christians are to hold onto this life with a light grasp and a nimble finger. We are to be ready to let go of this life in the blink of an eye. For we do not know the day of our death, much less the day of our Lord's return when He will sit on His throne of judgment and separate the sheep from the goats. That day is like tomorrow, when it comes it will be today and there will be no tomorrow.

If this terrifies or saddens you, then you need to repent. For our Lord's words are not words of terror and dread but of glad tidings and hope. He does not say, be afraid of this day and approach it with trembling, feeble hearts. Rather He says, "as this Day approaches lift up your heads, be joyful and content, your heart full of mirth and joyous singing, for by the coming of this Day your redemption draws near."

So often these words of our Lord are used to scare the wits out of people, but our Lord speaks these words to His disciples so that they may know and not be afraid. For this reason He says, "My peace I leave with you." The peace that such a terrible Day as the Day of Wrath that John the Baptist speaks of will not bring harm upon you but will actually be a day of great rejoicing as you are ushered into the kingdom of your heavenly Father.

Now, there are those who should be afraid of this Day, but it is not the Christian. For you, O Christian, are not in darkness, that the Day should overtake you as a thief. Those who should fear this Day are those who reject God's Son and revel in this life and world. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were warned many times by Lot to cease their sinful and shameful living and live to God in word and deed. They did not heed Lot's warning but laughed at him calling him a fool, an idiot. Even his own son-in-laws laughed at him. Yet they were burned to death before their feet left their bed in the morning while righteous Lot was saved.

The Day of Judgment came upon them like a thief in the night. There was ample warning, but they did not heed it, they were caught unawares. This group of people, those who reject Christ and His saving Word, should be deathly afraid of this Day. But they are not. They busy themselves with making a name for themselves and counting their money and insuring that they are admired and praised by men. They laugh at the Church and her preachers who preach repentance and warning and say, "Where is your Lord now? We're successful while you sit in vacant buildings and preach old myths and tales." They use their time unwisely, storing up for themselves treasure that will be destroyed by fire. Because of their hard and impenitent hearts they are storing up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

But you, dear Christian, raise your head for your redemption is drawing near. Do not fall into complacency, joining the world in its wonton gluttony of the self. That does not mean don't be happy or don't enjoy what God has given you in this life, but it does mean that we are to take seriously that we are in the world and not of the world.

It is true that Judgment Day will come quickly, like a flash of lightning, so that no one will be able to escape it. This warning of Christ we should take to heart and mark well, for we cannot avoid it. Let us, then, listen to Christ and await His return in prayer and the hearing of His Word, paying no attention to what the ungodly are doing. Their ways look appealing

because their way brings no hardship upon you. It is easy to live and let live, to be nice and friendly. It is hard to reject nice and friendly, family and friend, for the sake of the Gospel, yet such is our calling and election. It is easy to think that we have stood the test of time and have a secure dwelling here and are free to do as we see fit, but such thinking became the undoing of Jerusalem.

Our Lord sincerely cautions us to look for His glorious return, because it is a sure thing. The ungodly will be thrust into hellfire and torment while we will be liberated from the earth and from all of earth's misery. The whole world may look and act secure, but do not be fooled. Do not do as they do. Cling to Christ alone.

And do not be afraid. When you see the signs in the heavens and on the earth and under the earth do not be afraid for your redemption is drawing near. And indeed such signs are among us. The sun and moon lose their brilliance in eclipses and other ways. The stars are shaken by explosions. The sea is roaring and foaming, swallowing entire cities by Tsunamis. The earth shakes with volcanoes and earthquakes. It doesn't matter if these things happen naturally or not, if they are overwhelming or not, if they make the news or not, or whether or not they can be predicted. It matters that they happen and that the Lord Jesus Christ has said they are a sign of His return.

But amidst the tumultuous upheavals of creation and the devastating destruction, our Lord comforts His sheep. Our Lord gives a parable about trees, not a terrifying and frightening parable about fire, but a beautiful, comforting, lovely parable about trees. When the trees now shoot forth, you know that summer is at hand. So also, when the sun grows dark you should say the trees are budding. When the earth shakes and the seas roar and foam say that the trees are blossoming beautifully. The signs the world will treat with fear and dread, but you, O Christian, are to think of them as beautiful blossoms.

So when you hear of wars and rumors of wars do not say to yourself, "This has been since Cain killed Abel, and still no Jesus, these must not be the signs." Rather rejoice and be glad, for your redemption is drawing near. The times are evident: Christ is hated and preachers of the Gospel are counted as fools and jerks. The wicked throngs live extravagantly and without restraint. They only care about being famous and popular and care nothing for truth. Even churches are succumbing, thinking that to be a good church, a real church, they must be large and give up truth for the sake of being liked. They are afraid of being hated for Christ's sake, denying Him before men, and they will be denied by Him before His Father in heaven.

But rejoice, O children of Zion, lift up your heads for the kingdom of God is coming to you and indeed is among you because you believe and are baptized, because you suffer and because you petition and pray. Even in these cold days of December, we know that the summer draws near; when the lion shall lie down with the lamb and the child will sleep in a bed of vipers. And you, o sinner, will be holy and righteous all the days of your life. Thus does the Bride pray: Come Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠