ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH

Clothe Yourself in Faith, Hope and Love

Rev. Raymond Van Buskirk

> **AS WE GATHER —** God calls us to prepare for the Last Day by clothing ourselves in faith, hope and love — the very nature of Christ and to encourage others. Amen.

Zephaniah 1:7–16

(The Great day of the Lord is near: disaster and wrath for anyone who worships false gods.)

Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. [8] And on the day of the Lord's sacrifice "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. [9] On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. [10] "On that day," declares the Lord, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. [11] Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off. [12] At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.'

[13] Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them." [14] The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.

[15] A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, [16] a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

(Christ will return like a thief in the night. Clothe yourselves with the armor of God: faith, hope and love... Be awake doing His work. He will save you.)

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

[4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. [6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

[9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Matthew 25:14–30

(God gives us time, talents and treasure. He calls us to use them wisely to grow the Kingdom.)

"For it [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. [15] To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. [17] So also he who had received the two talents made two talents more. [18] But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

[19] Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. [20] And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' [21] His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' [22] And he also who had received the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' [23] His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, [25] so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' [26] But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? [27] Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. [28] So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. [29] For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. [30] And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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Sermon Summary: Clothe Yourself in Faith, Hope and Love

I had a woman say to me one time, “I can’t come to church because I don’t have anything to wear.” Whether we have formal, casual or in-between clothes – we still need to give God thanks and praise and to be strengthened by His Word and Sacraments. So, come!

Actually, the Christian has the most glorious dress of all the very righteousness of Christ. Saint Paul told the Christians at Galatia (3:27) “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” In baptism, God brings new life out of death.

What does it mean to “wear Christ”? It means to be washed by His blood (forgiven), covered by His righteousness and spiritually radiant with His glory and holiness. The most beautiful people are not the ones who look like Hollywood models, but the ones whose faces radiate with the glow of God’s presence in their hearts.

Saint Paul said (1 Thessalonians 5:8): “Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” Wearing Christ means displaying His abiding attributes: faithfulness, hope and love. These three show that we are in Christ and serving him.

Christians are children of light. We bring God’s grace and truth to others. From our behavior, they see Christ in our faith, hope and love. And, God accepts us in Jesus’ name.

Saint Paul continues (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11): “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

We have everything good to wear – faith, hope and love in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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Study Questions

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 and reflect on the following questions:

1. When and how will Christ return? (vs. 1–2, Matthew 24:43–51)

2. What does the world seek and will not have? (v. 3, see also Revelation 6:4)

3. What is the nature of the children of God and Christ? (vs. 4–5, Malachi 4:1–3)

4. How should believers await the return of Christ? (vs. 6–8)

5. Who will save us from God's wrath? (vs. 9–10)

6. What speech should we use with fellow Christians? (v. 11)

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Lord, cover me with your faithfulness, love and hope. Make my face shine with your glory and my words ring with Your praise. Make me eager to serve you and to encourage others in Your name in these Last Days. Amen.