



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "I Believe." The Nicene Creed
"Waiting." *Various Texts.*

□ **Day #1—Monday, October 20th. Read: Luke 21.25-28. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

The work of Jesus as confessed in the Nicene Creed comes to its ultimate fulfillment with these words...

...He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

The consummation of God's plan of salvation will begin with Jesus' (the Son of Man) return. The question of Jesus' return, often referred to as the "second coming," has always been an intriguing question for believers—especially about the *timing* of Jesus' return! What do we know for sure about the return of Jesus?

First, Jesus taught that his return was imminent; it could come at any moment...Second, Jesus' return is longed for, since his coming represents the saints' redemption...Third, it is natural to try to fill the gaps in revelation and put pieces of the eschatological puzzle together...Unfortunately, sometimes such speculation strays into date-setting or leads to dogmatism about exact timing and sequence...Fourth, Jesus told his disciples to keep awake and be on the watch (v. 36). So we do need to consider the end if we are to be sensitive to Jesus' instruction. Jesus called on disciples to be "end-time minded" without withdrawing from ministry under the assumption that the time is here.¹

In our text, Jesus describes the second coming using apocalyptic imagery. Apocalyptic imagery, or Apocalyptic Literature, is a highly symbolic form of communication consisting of visual, often cosmic representations that describe the end of the world, divine judgment, and warfare between good and evil. In these verses, Jesus is describing the cataclysmic signs that will precede His return and the end of time. Importantly, Jesus does this so His followers (you and I) do *not get discouraged* when these things take place!

In vivid apocalyptic imagery Jesus speaks of heavenly portents. It is not easy to see how literally the words are meant to be taken. Such language is often used in apocalyptic to denote sudden and violent change and the emergence of a new order. In any case...People will be perplexed and fearful. They will know that strange things are happening, but will not understand what is about to befall them. Jesus says he will come *with power and great glory*...Coming with glory points to royal power. Luke alone preserves the command *look up and raise your heads*. When the perplexing signs begin to occur Jesus' followers must not be downcast. Their deliverance is near. *Redemption* means release on payment of a price. There is a sense in which redemption has been finally accomplished on the cross; but the unfolding of its full implications is still future and it is this of which Jesus speaks.²

Consider/Reflect: "Jesus points to signs preceding His return. Today, fear and uncertainty should lead us to focus on His redemption. Pray earnestly for that day. Jesus' return brings us full deliverance from all evil of this world. [Pray]: Lord, keep us always expectant as we anticipate Your return. Amen."³

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, October 21st. Read: Luke 21.29-33. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Jesus now uses a parable to reinforce the need to be ready for His return, which will come as surely as summer follows spring! Jesus uses the fig tree as an image, because...

¹ D.L. Bock. *Luke* (InterVarsity Press, 1994).

² L. Morris. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1988).

³ *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

In Palestine the *fig-tree* is the first to show its leaves and indicate that summer is approaching; in other countries *all the trees* join it in announcing that summer is at hand. So the dreadful events prophesied by Jesus are in reality a sign of hope that the coming of the kingdom is near.⁴

Jesus assures that all these things will take place in “this generation.” What is Jesus alluding to here? According to J.A. Martin, Some think Jesus was telling His disciples that their generation would see the destruction of the temple. That interpretation stems primarily from verses 5–7 in which the discussion pertained to the temple’s destruction. However, because of verse 31 (in which Jesus spoke of the coming of the kingdom of God), and because of Matthew 24:34, it seems preferable to say His words refer to the generation living at the time of the cosmological events that will just precede His second coming. That generation will actually see the founding of the kingdom of God—something every generation of Jewish citizens has longed for throughout the nation’s history.⁵

L. Morris adds that the use of the word *generation* “concentrates on the kind of people that would persist through to the end. The expression ‘means only the last phase in the history of redemption...The paragraph concludes with the assurance that Jesus’ words have a permanence that does not attach to this material universe.’”⁶

All material things will perish. But the Word of Jesus, who created all things, is everlasting. “He is not a mere man or angel, neither is He just true, wise, and mighty, but He is the eternal Truth and Wisdom itself and Almighty God. He knows very well what and how He is to speak. He can also powerfully effect and do everything that He says and promises” (FD SC VII 43).⁷

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus points to the sure coming of God’s kingdom through the budding of a fig tree, and He promises that His teachings will abide forever. Do not ignore the sure signs and words of His coming. More firm than this creation is His promise of return and new creation for you. [Pray]: Lord, give us eyes to see the signs of Your coming kingdom and hearts to trust Your abiding Word. Amen.”⁸

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, October 22nd. Read: Luke 21.34-36. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus now turns to His warning and challenge in light of what He has just described: Be ready for His coming, specifically by not falling into a lifestyle of sin and carelessness!

Jesus’ followers must live in the light of these exciting events to come and not give way to the temptation to imitate people of the world. *Dissipation* (*kraipale*) is properly the hangover after a carousal, ‘the vulgar word for that very vulgar experience’. *Dissipation and drunkenness* are sins which are quite out of character for the Christian...The *cares of this life* are much more insidious, but either kind of failing can cause people to be unprepared. Verse 35 makes it clear that Jesus is talking about the end of all things and 36 that his followers have a special responsibility. The prayer he urges involves an attitude of life, an attitude that seeks to flee worldly sins as the believer concentrates on the service of God. *To stand before the Son of man* is to possess the ultimate salvation.⁹

As Jesus gives clear warnings that there will be signs that precede His coming, consequently, the Christian is to *be prepared* for Jesus’ return at any time. How are we to be prepared/ready? Through vigilance and prayer. As disciples, we are to be living and serving our Lord through our lives, knowing that Jesus could return at any moment! As J. Nolland cautions, “Abandonment to the cares and pleasures of life will blind one to the ever nearer approach of the climax of the end-time development. For those so preoccupied, “that day” will come suddenly, and, coming, it will prove to be a snare that entraps....The alternative approach to life is thought of as constant wakefulness (cf. Eph 6:18; Heb 13:17).”¹⁰

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus warns His followers about being dulled by worldly concerns... ‘A true and not a false putting to death [mortification] happens through the cross and troubles, by which God exercises us. . . .There is also a necessary, voluntary exercise. . . .These exercises are to be accepted not because they are services that justify, but because they are assumed to control the flesh, should overindulgence overpower us, and make us secure and unconcerned. This results in people indulging and obeying the tendencies of the flesh’ (Apology XV 45–47)...The unexpectedness of that day will catch the unprepared.”¹¹

4 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham Eds. *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

5 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

6 Morris. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*.

7 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

8 Ibid.

9 Morris. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*.

10 J. Nolland. *Luke* (Word, Incorporated, 1993).

11 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 23rd. Read: Acts 1.9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. — Explore: The background to this text(s).**

When we confess in the Nicene Creed our belief that Jesus will return “in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end,” in theological study we are alluding to the doctrine of *Eschatology*. The word, *Eschatology* is derived from the Greek word, *eschatos*, meaning “last” or “final.” “It refers to a time in the future when the course of history will be changed to such an extent that one can speak of an entirely new state of reality.”¹²

Again, the central, culminating event in eschatological study is the second coming of Jesus and the final judgment. Last week in *Acts 1*, we focused on the ascension of Jesus. As the followers of Jesus looked on, the angels who were present assured these followers that as Jesus ascended on the clouds, He would return on the clouds! “Christians confess that Christ will come again to earth at the end of time in an event usually described as the *Parousia* (Greek for “arrival” or “presence”). No one but the Father knows when that will be, according to Jesus himself, and Jesus refused to disclose the information to his disciples when they asked him for it (Matt 24:36).”¹³

In *1 Thessalonians*, Paul describes Jesus’ return in likewise vivid ways! As Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father, He will one day leave His glorious throne (again) and will now bring both judgment and the consummation of God’s salvific plan! While Jesus’ first coming was in obscurity, His second coming will be in power and glory!

The sounds mentioned in this verse—a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God... These three phenomena may all refer to the same thing, but probably they are three separate almost simultaneous announcements heralding Christ’s return...for His saints...announced from heaven forcefully and dramatically...After the bodies of dead Christians have been raised, those who are still alive and have been left behind momentarily will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...The logical and practical outcome of this revelation is comfort and encouragement...Not only do Christians not grieve like unbelievers, but followers of Christ can actually look forward eagerly to that great day. This is the great hope of the church, to see the Lord and be united with Him forever.¹⁴

Consider/Reflect: “Paul comforts the Thessalonians, saying that the dead in Christ will be the first to taste the resurrection and come with the risen Christ. At the second coming, we will all be together once more. Christians grieve over the death of loved ones but not as those who have no hope. The resurrection of our Lord, and the victory we have over death through Him, gives us a living hope, despite the fact that death separates loved ones and causes great pain. [Pray]: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for making the way through death a path of hope and joy, due to Your resurrection. Create in our hearts the joy and hope of Your victory over death. Amen.”¹⁵

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 24th. Read: 2 Peter 3.8-13. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus’ return ushers in the *Day of Judgment*, or the “*Day of the Lord*.”

Generally, this term refers to that time in the future when God or some divinely authorized agent would intervene in history, condemning the unrighteous and vindicating the faithful and obedient. In earlier biblical and intertestamental texts, it is usually nations which will be judged, while in later, particularly NT texts, more attention is devoted to the prospective judgment of individuals.¹⁶

In our text today, Peter, like Jesus, reminds believers that God is *patient*, desiring that all people come to faith in Christ and receive eternal life with God on Judgment Day. At the same time...

...Peter marries the promise of the Lord’s patience with the frequent New Testament promise of the Lord’s return: the day of the Lord will come like a thief (10; see also Mt 24:42-44; Lk 12:35-40; Rev 16:15). This is the precise counter-balance to what he has just argued. God will be patient, but he will come, and both the patience and the coming have been promised. There will be a day when God says, “There will be no more delay!” (Rev 10:6).¹⁷

12 www.logos.com

13 M. Ward, J. Parks, B. Ellis, & T. Hains Eds. *Lexham Survey of Theology*. (Lexham Press, 2018).

14 Walvoord, et, al, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

15 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

16 *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, In D. N. Freedman Ed. (Doubleday, 1992).

17 *NIV Bible Speaks Today: Notes* (IVP, 2020).

Here we can see the related themes and images of the cosmic signs preceding the end of time, the return of Jesus (*Parousia*), and the Day of Judgement, all come together. *The Day of the Lord* in the New Testament...

...is eminently the day of Christ, the day of His coming in the glory of His Father. The very conception of Him as the “Son of man” points to this day; e.g., Jn. 5:27 says that the Father “has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man” (cf. Mt. 24:27, 30; Lk. 12:8). In the NT also, however, there is a dark background to the bright picture, for it still remains a “day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5f)... To the unbeliever, the NT depicts it as a day of terror; to the believer, as a day of joy. For on that day Christ will raise the dead, especially His own dead, the bodies of those that believed in Him... All Pauline literature is especially suffused with this longing for the Parousia, the day of Christ’s glorious manifestation. The entire conception of that day centers therefore in Christ and points to the everlasting establishment of the kingdom of heaven, from which sin will be forever eliminated.¹⁸

Consider/Reflect: “The day of the Lord is a familiar Old Testament image for the ultimate day of God’s judgment, his final day in court when he settles the injustices of the world (e.g., Is 2:12; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20). That day’s ‘coming as a thief’ refers to a saying of Jesus (extant in Mt 24:43). Different ancient thinkers had different lists of elements (the Stoics, who believed the world would be resolved into fire, had four, like most writers: earth, water, air and fire), but Peter’s point is that everything will be destroyed. The destruction or purifying renewal of heaven and earth was also common in apocalyptic tradition.”¹⁹

□ **Day #6-Saturday, October 25^h. Read: Psalm 5.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on *Psalm 5* and:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.²⁰

Question/Reflect: “Boasting and deceit inevitably lead to destruction. David’s petition reveals that God leads us out of such sins and covers us with His favor. God declares us righteous and thus covers us with His favor through faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice for all of our sins. [Pray]: Keep us ever mindful of this great gift of righteousness by faith alone, O Lord. Through Word and Sacrament, cover us and remind us of Your constant and protective favor. Amen.”²¹

18 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*. W. Bromiley Ed. (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988).

19 C.S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

20 Martin Luther. “Luther’s Small Catechism.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

21 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.