

“You Know Very Well”

Last Judgment

1)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

2)

November 8, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

You can picture mom or dad right now coming to tell you – “You know better than that.” I don’t know what you just got in trouble for. How often didn’t mom or dad tell you –

- ...Don’t wear muddy shoes on the freshly cleaned carpet
- ...You’re going to get hurt
- ...You know what time your curfew is.

Our parents are or were simply looking out for our good. Our heavenly father disciplines us in much the same way, for example, when he tells us in our second lesson today – “**You know very well...**” What is it that God wants us to know very well?

First of all, **Judgment Day is Coming**

Paul writes – **²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.**

“The day of the Lord” is the day of Judgment – and it is coming. Throughout time, God has made promise and prophesy and they all have come true.

Consider times of judgment that have come true in the Bible.

We’re told in Genesis 6 – **⁵The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ⁶The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.**

Believers intermarried with unbelievers taking the believers away from God. God’s heart was “grieved” at all the sin that was taking place. God commanded Noah to build an ark. And Noah as he built the ark, told others that judgment from God was coming. Imagine Noah building a huge ark in the middle of dry land – perhaps you can picture a big ark more than a football field long sitting at the corner of Oneida and Lombardi. As much as Noah warned the people, they would all laugh at him. The people did not come to repentance.

In Jesus' day he, too, spoke of impending judgment from God – as we heard in our gospel lesson – Matthew 25 – he'll separate the sheep from the goats....and the unbelievers **“will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”**

What did the people of Jesus' day do? They didn't listen to him, they rejected him. They wanted an earthly king, a bread king. They didn't believe Jesus was the Savior. They rejected Jesus, put him on trial and sentenced him to death.

And now today, is the world today any different than Jesus' time or the days of Noah? The world in the last days is just as Jesus said it would be – **“For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”** (Matt 24)

Why a Judgment Day?

We think of judgment being handed down in a court room, from a judge, because we've been convicted of wrongdoing. Imagine sitting before God the Father, the righteous Judge, creator of the universe, ruler of all. He knows our every sin – thought, word and deed. Our list of offenses against him is a mile long. God tells us in the bible that what we deserve for our sins against him is death. But it's not just a departing from this world, it's an eternal separation and punishment in hell – as we heard before.

Should we be afraid? On the surface, it seems very scary. But for believers, it is not. It is something to look forward to. Why?

God spared us from judgment

God saw the condition of man from the very beginning, how we have sinned and ruined our relationship with him. But God, in his love and mercy, sent his one and only Son into the world to pay for the sins of the world. Jesus lived a perfect life, and his perfectness and righteousness is now ours. Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins and mine. And he rose again to defeat even death itself.

How to prepare for Judgment Day

The apostle Paul tells us how to prepare for that day. God doesn't want us to be caught by surprise. He says – **“But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you**

like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

We need to **“Be alert and self-controlled”** so that we are always ready and prepared. It’s not simply a statement of – “Always be on your best behavior.” Think of it is growing in your relationship with your Lord. God gives the 10 commandments as a way to bless us. But think more in terms of growing in your relationship of love towards him...and, in love to your neighbor.” When you go about your daily life, consider everything that you do as if Jesus was right there with you as you did it. And everything that you do, you’re doing for him. We don’t want to sin, because it hurts him – even more, it’s what put him to death. He loved us to die for us. We live for him as a way to show our thanks. And how we live is alert and self-controlled.

God wants us in heaven with him

What does God want us to know very well – most of all? He wants us to know that he wants us in heaven with him. Here, Paul says – **“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Jesus said to his disciples – when they were scared and afraid – John 14:2-3 – **² In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

On Judgment Day we will hear him say what he said in our Gospel lesson – **‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.**

Hope for uncertain times

We live in uncertain times. God wants us to know very well the truths he has for us in God’s Word.

- The promise and blessing of Baptism – that we were marked as dearly loved and redeemed children of God
- The promise and blessing of the Lord’s Supper – that all of our sins are forgiven

- In his Word – he will never leave us or forsake us (Heb 12) and he will work all things out for our good. (Rom 8:28)

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” Could you use some encouragement in the midst of all the negative news in the world around us? Could you use more encouragement in your life, rather than shaming and being put down? Think of the people you are with here today, sitting next to. And think of all the people God has blessed you with in life. Consider how you might encourage each other and build others up.

Let’s pray – Dear Heavenly Father...

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.