

## Sermon for Advent 2 – Luke 21:25-36

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is no shortage of trouble in this world. Everywhere you turn there is another problem to be seen. There are the big ticket items of global proportions like terrorists, wars, and rumors of war. There are those of national proportions like shootings and bombings. And then there are the small items of personal proportions – which means they are small to everyone but us. Aches and pains, death and disease, a broken relationship, an ongoing feud, a lost job, a lost friend – the list of our worries may be a long one. Many of them, in fact, may be known to no one else but ourselves. It's those things that wake us up in the middle of the night and won't allow us to go back to sleep. They are the "might-have-beens" and the "I-should-haves" that consume our personal thoughts. Every son of Adam and daughter of Eve lives in the sea of sorrows and worries. It's enough to get anybody down.

But when the world has beaten us down, when the nations are in perplexity, when it looks like the sky is falling, and when the very stars of heaven seem to be arrayed against us – then, Jesus says to you: "Straighten up! Raise your heads! For your redemption is drawing near." This world is not your home. Repent of you worries. Leave them behind. "For who by worrying can add a single hour to his life or a cubit to his height?" Your Lord knows all your hardships and heartaches. He knows about the family strife and the lost job. He knows about the terrorists, the disease, and that empty place in your own heart.

He knows all this and more. He knows our worries better than we do. And still He says to us: "Straighten up! Raise your heads!" Jesus tells us this so that we might see more clearly that our redemption is drawing near. For all too often we are like a man walking down a dingy city street with eyes downcast watching only the shuffling of his own feet and the trash in the gutter. That man needs to lift up his head and look around at the real sights of the city: the tall buildings, the sun glistening off steel and glass.

So also it is with us. Long have our eyes focused on the fallen brokenness of this world and all that it brings. We are looking down at our own feet and the trash in the gutter of God's creation. But straighten up – Raise your head! You will see the beauties and Glories of the Heavenly City, Creation Redeemed, Paradise Restored, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. That is your destiny. The road you walk is long and difficult – and it is a narrow way. There is plenty of opportunity to fall off the path. So keep your eyes on the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. Keep your eyes on Jesus and His promise.

This world is not our home. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our passport is stamped in the blood of Christ – it is His death for our sins that frees us from

the tyranny of the devil's kingdom. Though we were citizens under the devil's tyranny by birth – we died to that kingdom and were reborn into God's kingdom when we were baptized. We were plunged with Christ into death so that we might be raised to a new life. For we are redeemed – bought and paid for with Christ's suffering in our place on the cross.

It is any wonder then why we don't feel at home here in the world? We are not of the world – Christ has called us out of the world. He has awakened His own new life inside of us. But the world goes on slumbering and heading down ...down ... down toward eternal ruin. Yet before that happened to us, the Spirit stirred up His power in us – calling us to our feet, rousing us from deadly sleep. “Straighten up! Raise your heads! Your redemption is drawing near!”

Of course, this is difficult. It's easier to die in the world's deep sleep than it is to be shocked awake. It's certainly less painful. So likewise, it would be less painful and easier for us to go with the flow, to live as the world would have us live, to leave our Lord Jesus behind – but that would be death. Yet Jesus wants life for us – so He threw water on our face to rouse us in Holy Baptism. He yells His life into us with His Word of Absolution. He invites us to eat and drink the living food of His Body and Blood so that we might have life spring forth within us.

This is the Christian life: to be awake, though tired and in pain, but to be awake and aware of the danger that surrounds us. That is better by far than being comfortable, asleep, and unaware of the growing danger that will come like a thief in the night.

“So straighten up and raise heads.” Be encouraged and do not faint from weariness. “For your redemption is drawing near!” Yes, it's difficult. Yes, the world is going to hell in a hand-basket. But look closer: Your Lord's Word remains forever. He cannot lie and what He says always comes true. He who died for you in shame on a cross. There, He bought your salvation. There, He blotted out God's wrath against your sin. This Lord has promised to come again and save you in glory.

He gave you a down payment of that promise at the baptismal font. There, Christ cleansed you in His death and resurrection. When you received Holy Baptism, you received life and forgiveness – what a gift! And yet even this miraculous sacrament is only the down payment on the glorious salvation that is to come when our Lord Jesus will again appear and raise the dead and usher us into everlasting life. This is your hope. Look for it. Straighten up! Raise your heads! “Heaven and earth will pass away,” but never God's Word. And neither will you. For in Baptism, God's eternal Word is joined to you. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠