Advent 1 Luke 21:25-36
November 28, 2021 220-29-19/1-15

Advent Means Jesus Is Coming – Again!
I. Rejoice in what this means.
II. Find comfort and strength in God's enduring Word.
III. Ever be careful and prayerful.

Dear Christian friends,

It's Advent. ALL AROUND so much is saying, "**Christmas** is coming!" Maybe not the **weather** yet – but the stores – the ads – the decorations – the **music**, etc. The focus is ALL ON Christmas. Even right here in church. **We have** our Advent wreath – just one candle is lit **so far** – but there's also a note in the bulletin about DECORATING CHURCH next Sunday and the Ladies' of St. John's Christmas party this week.

That's why I like the FOCUS and EMPHASIS of this **first Sunday** in Advent. There's no mention of **Christmas coming**. No, Christmas is PAST – it's come and **gone** – it's HISTORY. We can learn **from the past** but we can't live in the past. We can only live in the **present** – live in the present with our eyes ON THE FUTURE.

That's the message of this **first Sunday** in Advent. It's Advent and ADVENT MEANS JESUS IS COMING – AGAIN!" 1)Rejoice in **what this means**. 2)Find comfort and strength in God's **enduring Word**. 3)Ever be careful and **prayerful**.

I. Rejoice in what this means.

"There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth nations will be in anguish, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the surging waves, people fainting from fear and expectation of the things coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

We had very similar words just **two weeks ago** on the "Saints Triumphant" Sunday. WHY hear this so soon **again**? It's so easy for us to FORGET – to lose sight - of this. **Yes**, we know Jesus is COMING AGAIN – but in the meantime we have this to **take care** of – that **to do** – we have to run here and **go there**. SOUND FAMILIAR – like your life? We REGULARLY need that reminder that **Jesus is coming** AGAIN!

The signs indicate that could BE ANY DAY now - even **God willing!** – today. Jesus' **second coming** will mean JUDGMENT on all impenitent **sinners** and DELIVERANCE for God's waiting **people**. We SAW THAT so clearly illustrated in the OT reading. ALL **need** to learn well the lessons of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah unmistakably proclaim that ***"God will not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction."*** In our politically correct world where **no one** is to BE JUDGMENTAL and anything goes **as long as** I want it – Sodom and Gomorrah say, "THINK AGAIN! You don't play games with God and expect to win." See that smoke rising from those cities ***"like smoke from a furnace"*** and see the HOLINESS and RIGHTEOUSNESS of God. In Hebrews 10 we're told, ***"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*** Go ask the people of Sodom and Gomorrah what that **passage means**. Those who think God will "UNDERSTAND" – God will make an exception for their defiance – go stand **with Abraham** and see what he saw. When we're tempted to MAKE EXCUSES for our sins - when we don't see ANY REAL NEED to **repent** – we need the message of Advent – Jesus is coming AGAIN – now is the time to GET READY.

How do we GET READY for Jesus **coming again**? By properly celebrating Christmas. After looking at Sodom and Gomorrah we need to HIGH TAIL it to Bethlehem **as quickly as** possible. Our personal sins may **be very different** from the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah but **our sins** are just as damning. We're just as guilty of **disobeying** God – just as deserving of God's eternal condemnation. Oh to HEAR AGAIN that ***"good news of great joy – unto you is born a SAVIOR!"*** God's own Son born a baby in Bethlehem – born our Savior – that's the BEST **Christmas present** ever! God doesn't simply give us a SECOND CHANCE – He gave us a SAVIOR! Jesus came and made peace between us and our Creator. Jesus lived for us – IN OUR PLACE – that life of **perfect love** and **obedience** that we owed God but never could live. Jesus suffered and died on that cross as the ONE, ALL-SUFFICIENT sacrifice that really does ***"take away the sin of the world."*** Jesus came out of His grave alive and victorious over death and He now promises us eternal life in heaven the very moment we die. RUN to Bethlehem - hold that Baby Jesus **tightly** with the arms of faith - and NEVER, EVER let go of Him.

Indeed, rejoice to know that ***"this same Jesus"*** is COMING AGAIN. ***"When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near."*** That day will bring our FULL and FINAL salvation. Never again will we have to battle with the devil, the world, our own sinful natures. No more temptations – **problems** – sorrows – sickness – tears. No more death! We will live forever IN GLORY with our Savior God in that ***"new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness."*** Oh rejoice that Jesus is COMING AGAIN! **Yes**, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

And in the meantime…

II. Find comfort and strength in God's enduring Word.

Jesus spoke these words on **Tuesday** of Holy Week. The Jewish leaders were OUT TO TRAP Jesus in His words and get rid of Him **once and for all**. Jesus had been talking to His disciples ABOUT the coming fall of **Jerusalem** and His coming AGAIN on the Last Day – and about the days in between. ***"Amen I tell you: This generation will not pass away until all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away."***

With ***"this generation"*** Jesus didn't mean that those VERY SAME people who were alive back then would STILL BE alive when He comes again. They'd be 2,000 years old and **still counting**! Up until the **last minute** there will ALWAYS BE people just like the Jews **back then**. People who won't listen to Jesus – who want nothing **to do** with Jesus – people who see Jesus as a TROUBLEMAKER and a threat to their **lifestyle**. People who want Jesus ON THEIR TERMS and not His terms. There are plenty of people just like that! We need to be careful here that we DON'T START FOLLOWING **their example**! When God tells me something in His Word that I may not like hearing – IT'S NOT GOD who **needs to change** – I NEED to change my ways.

It will be hard to STAY FAITHFUL to God and His Word. God's faithful will ALWAYS BE the **minority**. ***"Broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it,"*** Jesus tells us. ***"But narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."***

Find your comfort and **strength** in God's ENDURING WORD. Jesus declares it a FACT, ***"Heaven and earth will pass away."*** Jesus also declares it a FACT, ***"but My words will never pass away."***

We see the world COLLAPSING all around us – all pointing to Jesus COMING AGAIN and SOON. Marriage and the family are **under vicious assault –** common decency – a respect and **reverence** for God and life – a SENSE OF SHAME – **all long gone**. MORE AND MORE **we Christians** are not only OUT OF STEP with the world we're under attack by the world for our **Christian** faith and values.

Find your comfort and **strength** in God's ENDURING WORD. Advent waiting – Advent living – is BEING IN God's Word – being guided by God's Word. DON'T GO by what you see on TV – by what everybody else is doing – by what feels right or **makes sense** to your **sinful nature**. GO to God's

Word. ASK, "Lord, what do YOU WANT me to believe? **How** do YOU WANT me living my life? Lord, is THIS TRUE – is this pleasing TO YOU?" Keep going back to God's Word to STAY FOCUSED on Jesus – to stay close to Jesus – to be ready for Jesus. Advent means **Jesus is coming** AGAIN and that makes coming to church every week – having those **daily devotions** at home – a TOP PRIORITY for us all.

Jesus is coming AGAIN and that also means…

III. Be very careful and prayerful.

"Watch yourselves or else your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, and that day may come on you suddenly …like a trap."

Literally Jesus says, "KEEP ON watching yourselves." With our sinful natures **we can be** our WORSE ENEMY. ***"Let him who thinks he's standing be careful that he doesn't fall,"*** Paul warns. FAMOUS LAST words are, "I'd never do that." Take Lot in the OT reading. WHAT JEOPARDY he put himself and **his family** in all because Sodom and Gomorrah **looked like** such a NICE PLACE to live. Lot's wife just COULDN'T totally break from there. She ***"looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."***

Advent means **Jesus is coming** AGAIN so be ever careful. HOW will we handle life in **these last day** when the waiting **almost becomes** UNBEARABLE? Too many turn to **drinking** and **drugs**. PLENTY of lives – **families** – **souls** have been ruined by the SINFUL ABUSE of alcohol and drugs. Life can ***"weigh down our hearts"*** but the BOTTLE is not the answer to our **problems** and **pains**.

Then there's ***"the worries of this life"*** – life pulling us in **all directions** – life distracting us from ***"the one thing needful"*** and messing up our PRIORITIES. The devil is great at getting our EYES OFF of Jesus – of getting us SO BUSY we forget that ***"heaven and earth"*** and all the things of this life ***"will pass away"*** so there's no need to get ALL WORKED UP about them. The devil is great at getting us DISTRACTED so that we forget that **Jesus is coming** AGAIN. We need those reminders to "KEEP CHRIST **in Christmas**" – that "Jesus IS the reason **for the season**." EVER ***"keep watching yourself!"***

"Praying that you may be able to escape all these things that are going to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." The word for ***"praying"*** literally means ***"begging"*** – CONTINUALLY begging God for his help **because** we just won't make it WITHOUT GOD'S HELP.

"That you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." That's the GOAL of our Advent living and preparing. Jesus is coming AGAIN and we want to be ready WHENEVER He comes! Amen.

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