

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 24:15-28
November 12th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Have Told You Beforehand

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The next three Sundays all prepare us for the coming of the season of Advent. Our attention is directed to the end of time; the time of the Judgment of mankind on account of their manifold transgressions. Our Lord's judgment is a twofold judgment, for He certainly will judge all mankind on the Last Day according to the works they have done; those who trust in their own righteousness, will be cast into Hell, and those who upon our Lord + Jesus Christ's works rely will be granted eternal life with Him. But the judging of all unrighteousness by our Lord + Jesus Christ begins with the holy Cross.

In the holy Cross of our Lord He destroys the power of sin, death and the devil. He judges all unrighteousness to not be worthy to co-exist with righteousness and the righteous in His sight. Therefore, on the cross He condemns all unrighteousness, and drags it down with Him into Hell, and there He commands the powers of sin, death and the devil to remain until the Last Day when He will judge both the quick and the dead of all mankind, according to their works.

Our Lord, in today's Gospel, speaks of His cross to His disciples, as they gather around Him to question Him about the end of times. Our Lord tells His disciples to look out for the "*abomination of desolations*" that is spoken of by the prophet Daniel. This is a reference to His cross; His suffering and death on behalf of all mankind. For what is an abomination? What is desolation? An abomination is something that defiles a holy place. Therefore, an abomination is described as something that defiles the Temple; our Lord is the True Temple. The Temple of His body is defiled with bruises and scars and nail prints; it is even defiled with the point of a spear, all on account of the jealousy of the Jews, and their denial and abuse of the Messiah; the Christ.

A desolation is the utter destruction of something. Our Lord's body is laid desolate—the True Temple is laid desolate—in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. His body remain desolate for three days in the grave, and then our Heavenly Father raised Him from the dead, so that now our Lord + Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of the Father, waiting for the day when He will come again to judge both the quick and the dead, and finish the Judgment that He began on the holy Cross.

Therefore, what are we to do as we await the coming of our Lord? Our Lord gives us instructions through His speaking to His disciples. In those days "*there will be great tribulation.*" This is the time in which we live, the Church on Earth suffers great tribulation; and has suffered great tribulation since the time our Lord lived on the Earth. The Church is always under attack, either from within by false and

pernicious doctrine, or from without by persecution and unbelief. Therefore, in this Gospel from the Evangelist St. Matthew, we are comforted by our Lord with His words today.

Now I know you may hear this Gospel, and be driven into fear, for it speaks of destruction, tribulation, and the end of days. And when I say that they are meant for our comfort, that may give you pause to think about my sanity. How can I say these words are for our comfort? Because in these words we see our Lord's mercy; in these warnings from our Lord, we see that He is preparing us for these tribulations, and giving us instructions on how to interpret them, and how to behave when they happen.

What does this Gospel tell us to do? Those who are in Judea, flee to the mountains. This can be understood in an earthly sense, and in a spiritual sense. When Rome sacked Jerusalem in 70 A.D., in order to eradicate the Jews from off the face of the Earth, on account of the uproar that they created on account of their persecution of Christians, all of the Christians in Jerusalem, saw these things about to happen and heeded our Lord's warning, so that they fled to the hills, before Jerusalem was besieged. The Temple of the Jews was defiled and utterly destroyed by the Romans, for the razed it to the ground, and placed in its spot a statue of Hadrian the Equestrian.

In a spiritual sense, our Lord is telling all those who are in Judea to flee to the True Church; it is a command to flee the valley of Judaism, and cling to the mountain of Christianity. Or to say it another way, our Lord is teaching His disciples to leave the valley of works righteousness, and cling to the righteousness of our Lord's works; to trust in Him, and not in their fulfilling of the Law of Moses.

The same is true of the next warning from our Lord. *"Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."* Certainly, when the Romans were marching to Jerusalem, one should not waste time fleeing Jerusalem, on account of any possession He had in the house, or for the sake of an extra pair of clothes, but our Lord is here telling us to not return to the former ways that we left when we became Christians. Do not turn back to the religion of the world—the religion of works. Do not turn back to your former sinful life, ignoring God's Word and His Laws, but rather live in His Word and obey His commandments. Do not, on account of persecution, trial, or shame or guilt, turn back away from your Savior, but cling to Him; flee to Him, and trust in His mercy.

"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" These words refer to the Church's catechumens and those new in the faith. For the Church gives birth to new Christians in the womb of Mother Church, through the working of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace. And new converts to Christianity are fed, not with the meat of Word of God, but with the pure milk of the Gospel, as St. Peter tells us in His Epistle. In great times of tribulation; in times of persecution, it is especially difficult for those new in the faith to remain faithful, and many unborn babies, and young infants are killed by unbelief and despair, not wanting to endure the suffering and persecution that comes from being a child of God and a brother of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Therefore, they flee the Church, and forsake the mercy given by our Lord. This causes holy Mother Church much sorrow and pain, for the loss of her children is not easy for any mother to bear.

"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath." In these words, our Lord would warn us against falling into unbelief or works righteousness. For by winter is meant living in unfaithfulness to our Lord's Word; it is unbelief, manifest sinfulness, and the like, all those kinds of behaviors that are unacceptable to our Lord, but to which people remain in even though they call themselves Christians. The same is true of the Sabbath, for this refers to works righteousness. How many Christians there are who believe that they will be saved by their keeping of the Law? Out of these things our Lord would turn us away. For He does not desire that we either trust in our works, nor live lives unworthy of the calling to which we have been called; our salvation is not in our trust upon our works, but our salvation by the mercy of Christ, also does not give us a free will to do whatever we

desire contrary to His Law. No! He would have us trust in His perfect obedience, and love Him by obeying His commands gladly and willingly.

In all this our Lord shows His mercy toward us (and that theme, if you've noticed happens throughout the Propers for today—that theme of our Lord's mercy), for our Lord tells us that the days of tribulation will be cut short. For what reason will they be cut short? On account of the elect; the chosen of God by water and the Word the days of tribulation will be cut short. Do you see how merciful our Lord is toward us today? Certainly, He gives us warnings today, but even in these warnings, He is lovingly directing us back to trust in Him alone. For these warnings of our Lord today, are indeed frightening if we consider that we have to endure them by ourselves, and by our own strength, but such is not the case, for our Lord + Jesus Christ, is the one Who is present amidst all of our suffering and tribulation by His holy Word, and He is present in His blessed Sacraments.

This is why we gather today, to find relief from this age of great tribulation. Where do we find this relief? Our Lord calls us to gather together today with Him, by His Word. He is present with us now as we hear Him speak to us in His holy Word; He is present with us today, as you hear His Word preached from this pulpit; He is present with us today, relieving us of our pain and suffering and tribulation in this life, by the words of Invocation, which remind us that we are baptized into Him and His holy Name is placed upon us and we are called His brothers, and sons of the Heavenly Father; and He is present with us today in His very Body and Blood given in bread and wine. Here at this altar we meet our Lord + Jesus Christ face to face, and we receive Him with our lips, and show our love for Him, and our thanks for having saved us from sin, death and the devil, by His holy Cross—His abomination of desolation—that won for us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. And when we meet Him at this holy Altar and receive His Body and Blood with our lips in bread and wine, He gives us the gifts He won for us: forgiveness, life and salvation.

Therefore, let us like the eagles gathered around the carcass, gather together around our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine, and be strengthened in the one true faith, so that we might not be lead astray into false belief, despair, or other great shame or vice, but might cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. And He will carry you through until the Last Day when He shall take you to live with Him for all eternity in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.