**Hebrews 10:11-25**

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. **15** And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, **16**  “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” **17** then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” **18** Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. **19**  Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, **20** by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23**  Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25**  not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**“Enduring The Times”**

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. It is that time of year again. Fields are empty, days are shorter, and seasons are changing. The historic church follows this pattern of creation as a witness. What comes now at the end of the Church Year is about the end times, the last Day, or ultimately Christ’s return. None can miss the strong emphasis of what would be troubling times. Of course, a sinful world is crafty at interpreting the times. Rather than seeking permanence in anything, change has become the mantra for our security. “Change or die” is the slogan that seems to sell. “Update this, update that” is the new kind of comfort for our 21st century. Yet, even the enduring hope in change shows us how The End is drawing near.

For as much as Jesus’ death and resurrection changed everything. There was no end to what the Jews saw for a time. Their temple still stood in Jerusalem as an icon of God’s glorious favor. Life continued to revolve around sacrifice and the priesthood set up from the Old Testament. The letter of Hebrews written before the temple’s destruction declares what God made permanent for all time. Jewish Christians were to look to Christ now as the true sacrifice, priest, and temple. This would have even more value once the Romans destroyed the temple in 70AD. They fulfilled the judgment rendered by Jesus, “There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” Judgment started with the temple, but it is more than a note in history. For any to endure the approaching Last Day is to endure it always in Christ and His sacrifice.

Endurance is a common necessity in life. Parents need it for raising children, athletes work on it for playing sports, and soldiers must have it if they go to war. The endurance of man is what falls short before the Last Day. You can look around at the crumbling governance, shaky economics, or erosion of family. You can consider your own life as the years go by knowing the endurance of youthfulness does not last. Yet, the focus of Jesus was first and primarily for Him on the temple. This was the center and heart of Israel. Christianity has had glory days of the church that have passed on too from one nation to the next. It was a lot easier to draw near when plenty came to churches, when church was culturally acceptable, and when boldness was about building churches. There must be another kind of endurance for our time!

Christ left the temple during Holy Week and so did the glory it had. Since the cross was the place of sacrifice, the whole Old Testament system ended in Him. Hard days of uncertainty over the temple meant a lot of darkness. Jewish Christians faced persecution from their traditional families. Plenty of false teachers also lead many astray as Jesus said. Since liberalism today both attacks and keeps trying to change Christianity. Caving to what makes a person happy and throwing Jesus and His Word under the bus is common. Just as uncertainty over God’s Word not only causes doubt, but also raise up false witnesses proclaiming to have a “new” truth for our time. To hold fast to Christ with a good confession cannot be by our strength. Persecution and temptation wear us down and leave us empty. There must be an enduring hope outside of our hands!

Christ knew that the temple had also grown cold with the love of God. How often did He tell the Jewish leaders of all stripes, “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:13). Broken days of love leave much loneliness and disappointment. Neglect is a number one problem today in all spheres of life, even the baptized are by nature forgetful, distracted, and lazy. If we are to encourage love and good works, it is more than about community, but love that comes directly from what God gives by His Word. Anything less is cold, self-made, and centers love away from Christ who loves us. If we are to encourage each other, it must come from someone able first to take care of each of us. There must be One able to endure with love for every kind of sinner.

As the Day is surely drawing near, the blind Pharisee denies the lawlessness of life or the tribulation over how I fall short will cause fear. The endurance that remains is what rests for any in Christ. No longer is it to draw near to a temple, but to Him. His glory was torn down in a day only to be triumphant for all time. The Father dealt the true blow of judgment to His Son, while others were worried about the temple. To draw near with a true heart to God is to repent and believe the Gospel. “We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us…” Drawn to the fleshly temple of Christ means trusting in this priest and His sacrifice. Baptism has washed us in the crucified Savior who does not pass away. Rather than worry over cultural acceptance, not even death can keep us from the holy places of heaven that welcome us in Jesus’ Name.

As the Day is surely drawing near, we continue to abide in Christ with a good confession. Not because we have been so bold like those in the past. Nor are we so immune to doubts at the present. It is simply from having a high priest over the house of God on our behalf. The faithfulness of Christ never wavers a day to save those in darkness. He continues to speak in a liberal age what none can remake, justify, or explain away, “Your sins are forgiven.” Confessing Christ is hope that holds fast to the truth that stands. The Holy Spirit has given this witness of the law written in our hearts and minds to uphold what is good for life. Yet, since Jesus has paid the perfect price, grace abounds as the best gift able save for “there is no longer any offering for sin.” Our confession as Lutheran Christians is with all hopefulness in Christ and His Word that cannot fail.

As the Day is surely drawing near, to neglect meeting together is no solution for the baptized. Rather than looking at the lack of love by the body, it is all about the head. “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” The love of Christ is encouragement that binds up the broken love of sinners. Our holiness is not from how well we love, but from how well Jesus loves us. By His Sacrament God meets us together in, with, and under bread and wine. It is love that does not grow cold, distant, or forgetful. What Christ pours out to eat and drink is care directed towards you. Togetherness is love stirred up for each other by way of the cross. There are all kinds of love today seeking to meet a list of social demands. The body of Christ shares encouragement from a bigger standard for “you see the Day drawing near.”

Our 21st century comfort in change must still face the permanent gift God has given. He is the temple that stands and the heart of His Church. For any to endure the approaching Last Day is to endure it always in Christ and His sacrifice. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.