**Luke 21:5-28**

And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, **6** “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” **7** And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” **8** And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. **9** And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.” **10** Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. **11** There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. **12** But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. **13**  This will be your opportunity to bear witness. **14** Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, **15** for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. **16** You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. **17**  You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. **18** But not a hair of your head will perish. **19** By your endurance you will gain your lives. **20** “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. **21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, **22** for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. **23**  Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. **25** “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, **26** people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

**“The Lord Keeps Your Life”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. If you have apprehension about life, if the world keeps coming apart around you, and if the darkness refuses to let you see anything that is good. You have come to the place that proclaims, “…If God is for us, who can be against?” (Romans 8:31) You have been given this promise, “The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life” (Psalms 121:7). You have the prayer that sums up what to say before our Father in heaven, “…but deliver us from evil.” Outside of the boasting, beyond the painful battles, and far above our ways God gives certainty for in Christ there is a future, peace reigns, and this salvation stands.

As our nation struggled over the elections, let us not forget the greater honor due to our veterans. It can be to any who served in the military, but especially those who have fought in war. They have faced the darkest of evils, made the toughest judgments on life, and bear burdens harder than any vote. Yet, the trauma felt by nation rising against nation is only a fraction of the growing darkness. As the Church Year approaches its end, so Christ holds nothing back about the fact of this fallen world. It is for comfort then that we confess every Sunday, “And He will come again to judge both the living and the dead.” Raise your heads for a righteous judgment draws near to redeem us from evil.

1. If the Lord told His disciples to, “straight up and raise your heads.” It is because their heads were already down from evil.
2. Falsity would remove true saving faith.

* Jesus put the chief concern first, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them.”

- It meant they had to take care and not be lazy.

- Many would offer flawed Christs catering to worldly glories about the end. (Temple)

- Teaching these kinds of Christs were short-lived and made it seem like the end.

* The difficult task today still concerns heads down about Christ.

- Idleness can be more than mooching off the world, but having no care for Christ.

- Much false preaching paints a Christ for social change catering to worldly glory.

- When Christ in not grounded in scripture, it leaves panic over Him being Savior.

1. Fear over the end also can consume.

* Jesus said plenty about the troubling signs.

- There would be problems in the heavens far outside the reach of humanity.

- There would be strife on earth with a sinful creation causing death.

- There would be destruction by the hands of Gentiles upon the temple and Jerusalem.

* Such fear can consume us while heads are down.

- Things in the heavens no longer seem so scary as long as we can explain them.

- The strife on earth still lashes out and so we wonder about God?

- Like the temple, we sense the church shrinking in society and rising persecution.

1. Forgetfulness leaves nothing right with the Last Day.

* The calamities comes to an end for Jesus said, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”
* For the unbeliever this is the greatest shock of life.
* It was never about being drug into chaos, but to stand before Christ!
* The disciples experienced such a surprise when Christ rose from the dead.
* Heads down means despair forgets Christ is Lord.
* Where we make the Law have the final say and not the Gospel.
* The good of works need a more godly life for, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6)
* Dare we miss the judge who comes already to be with us by His Word and Sacrament?

1. Since Christ says, “straighten up and raise your heads” His blessed return is what delivers us from evil.
2. Christ makes us alert to evil by His righteous judgment.

* What came upon Him by the cross was faithless man, but God remained faithful.
* Nothing was right in the suffering and death of Christ.
* Laws were broken, man was raging, and God judged!
* Yet, the answer came forth with righteousness justice raised three days later.
* With heads raised, we have become alert to life in Christ.
* The judge who comes already died with you in baptism.
* You have received a righteous judgment to be a child of God.
* This forgiving Word He never grows cold to speak to you.

1. Christ gives confidence to endure evil for He cares.

* When the disciples dealt with persecution, Christ went with them.
* The Savior did not hide having to suffer evil, but from it would come good.
* “This will be your opportunity to bear witness.”
* For the sake of His Name, “Not a hair of your head will perish.”
* With heads raised, we have confidence because Jesus cares.
* “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.”
* To suffer evil for the sake of good does change hearts and confesses Christ.
* Help rests not in works, but trusting how the God of salvation has ahold on you.

1. Christ promises His redemption undoes all evil on the Last Day.

* This perfect freedom none other can bring.
* Luther describes how Christ’s return is necessary saying, “The purpose of my coming is not to cast you into hell but to deliver you from the vile, sick, infirm, and wicked life of this world, to separate you from the devil and his servants, and to place you among the angels where you will not suffer but live in everlasting glory” (Postils Vol. 5 49).
* With heads raised, redemption comes while the world seems to come undone.
* The fears that none can escape, must let Christ be nothing less than Savior.
* His Word and Sacrament is the way He keeps telling us, “I have not forgotten you.”
* This Judge has a righteous verdict that even renders the resurrection of the dead.

For all the uncertainty, all the shame, all the grief, it is a call to focus on Christ. In His redemption, we have what the world cannot give, what we can never do, and what does make the Devil despair. Raise your heads for a righteous judgment draws near to redeem us from evil. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.