**Luke 21:5-36**

**5**  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.” **29** And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. **30** As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. **31** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. **32**  Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. **33**  Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. **34** “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. **35** For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. **36** But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

**“Look Through The Chaos To Christ”**

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Ears perk up with talk about the End of the world. Repeatedly, we find books and movies pouring out graphically how this will all go down. Science also tries to search for answers over what will actually be the cause of it all. Even some in Christianity, to their shame, imagine there is a way to predict the Day of Judgment. Other religions address the end, but only Christians have an exclusive claim on the Last Day. This is because it comes from no one else other than Jesus. It is nice to have the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation. However, only God can say what Jesus says. “For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Judgment Day will be about how you lived your life. Some see this deciding fact based upon being a good person. Good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. However, as the book Lutheranism 101 points out, “God sees behind how we live our lives. The Bible tells us, ‘without faith it is impossible to please God’ (Hebrews 11:6). We might say that works are dead without faith. Faith in Christ is the key”(54). Of course, what is this justifying faith? Is it a choice, a product we can produce, a power worked by man? No, St. Paul reminds us, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). This is what Jesus declared in the temple the last week before His death. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” In the chaos of judgment, only the Word of Jesus gives confidence for He comes to save.

Removing the clouded picture of judgment gives confidence. It sure did not sound this way at first in the temple. Those who heard Jesus knew what the last book of the Old Testament prophesied. It was a strict sound of judgment. “The arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble.” The day coming would, “leave them neither root nor branch.” Of course, Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem as a sign of God’s judgment in rejecting His Son. The death and resurrection of Jesus would send out the glory of God from Israel to the ends of the earth. Rather than a specific people and nation, God would now be among the nations by means of His Church. Yet, the judgment that fell upon Israel in 70AD was only a small picture of what will finally fall upon the whole world. The time of the Gentiles is exactly that only a time.

We want to gussy it up and call our age one of progress, but in our hearts, the truth speaks. Nothing is different in this generation as in others. The Law still shows our brokenness as sinners. The pain of death is present whether we have unlimited health care or not. The Devil even turns “technology” into a tool for his own chaotic pleasure. Anyone can notice these troubles without Jesus words about judgment. However, His final word about The Last Day happens to be during the last week before His death. It means anxiety over the judgment falling upon this world ends up being unbelief. It missed the fact that The Father already judged all sinners in His Son. Jesus removed the clouded picture of judgment to give confidence to trust Him. He said, “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Since judgment fell upon the cross, we look to Jesus. He bares the weight of our sin and failures in order to save.

The confidence that Christ gives to face the end can easily become clouded. When asking about the sign for the temples destruction, what Jesus first tells his disciples had nothing to do with the temple. 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.” The sign of the temples destruction began when Jesus rose from his judgment of death. He showed Himself to be the true temple of God even while sinful man mockingly said, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” (Mark 15:29-30). The risen Jesus tore down false confidence in a place. However, idolatry would now be in false prophets or persons coming in His Name. Since the baptized were the temple of God, the church had only one confidence against this deception. Jesus gives the answer, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

The warning cannot be any clearer. Christian confidence can become clouded. False preachers float around today promoting all kinds of good in the name of Jesus, even things that God’s Word does not call good. However, Jesus of the Word has one goal. It has nothing to do with this life, but saving you from judgment. He says, “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.” That is the way things will be as time grows short. Hearts will grow cold to the crucified Jesus. How quickly does security of this life become an enemy of God’s Word. St. Paul warns, “keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.” Jesus says persecution is a mark of His baptized facing the pressure. What feels like entrapment is only an opportunity to bear witness. It will not be to self-confidence or inner strength, but the confident Word Jesus’ speaks to save from judgment. He will forgive the guilt of our works that fall short before Him. He will raise us up with love so that we “do not grow weary in doing good.”

The chaos will continue until the final day of Christ. It is more for some and less for others, just as it appears that way in one generation versus another. However, what is passing away cannot compare to the consistency of the Word. In many ways, this gentile time of the nations is like a sweater with a dangling string. It is unraveling and there is no way to cut the string. Christ is pulling on it with His victory as Lord and Savior. Some will faint with fear to discover the Law is not what saves a sinful world. Others will be overwhelmed because the worship of works fades away before Him who comes to save His people. Jesus told His disciples, “But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Distraction is the most dangerous thing we face today as things come undone. You are looking here and there. You are doing this and that. What is it going to take to keep it together? Judgment draws near and is not in our hands. The unbinding that happened during Reformation times gives comfort for our chaotic times that brings Christ even closer to us today. Luther remarks, “True, no human being will escape terrified by what will happen. But one must rivet his heart on the Word and, bracing himself against reason, say, we must not be terrified. The signs are but beautiful blooms announcing that my Redeemer and redemption are near. So, welcome, O God, my beloved Lord and Redeemer, and come, as I have often prayed that your kingdom should come to me” (Postils, Vol. 5 52). Judgment has always belonged to Jesus. He already provides us what we need to see Him confidently come to save. His Church escapes the times of any age by a firm trust in Him by Word and sacrament. We need not be surprised like others who have no hope, no savior, or no eternal salvation. In the chaos of judgment, only the Word of Jesus gives confidence for He comes to save. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.