

***“Jesus Brings Your Greatest Joy”***

Text: Luke 21:25-36

“Joy the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; Let every heart prepare Him room and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing.” (LSB 387 vs. 1) This is a favorite song of this season as we prepare for the coming of a Savior. The hymn actually is one of the Christmas season that rejoices in the coming of the Savior.

Our gospel lesson for today talks of the return of Christ, but Jesus tells us, “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Joy came on that first Christmas long ago, and for believers it will come again as Jesus comes again to take us to him in heaven.

The Advent season that begins today has really three emphases: 1) The coming of Jesus in his birth at Bethlehem; 2) The return of Christ in judgment; 3) The coming of Jesus in word and sacrament. As believers in Him all three give you joy because-

**JESUS BRINGS YOUR GREATEST JOY**

**I. He is coming to you**

**II. His time is near**

**III. Preparations for His coming are essential**

**I.**

**A.** In the New Testament there is numerous times that the return of Christ is mentioned. If we broaden that search to include His first coming at Bethlehem there are any number of significant facts to consider. First of all these are

promises and are intended for encouragement and hope for us today. The Old Testament is saturated with prophecies concerning the first advent of Christ and so both testaments are filled with references to the second coming of Christ. One scholar has estimated that there are 1, 845 references to the second coming in the Old Testament where 17 of 39 books really emphasize this fact. In the 260 chapters of the New Testament, there are 318 references to the second advent of Christ—that means 1 out of every 30 verses. Twenty-three of the 27 New Testament books refer to this great event. Consider that for every prophecy in the Bible concerning the first advent of Christ, there are 8, which look forward to His second!

Our text comes in the middle of St. Luke's account of the last times. There will be wars and rumors of wars that is something we certainly live with today. If it isn't Afghanistan or Iraq, it's the threat of nuclear build up in Iran or North Korea.

Jesus will be seen for who He really is for He will come with power and great glory. The world will be overcome at this time, but for you and me it will be different-

**B.** Verse 28 tells us that it is a time of great joy for Christians. One time someone said to me: "Pastor, you know why Lutherans don't talk about the second coming? They don't like change!" There are those who look at these signs with fear and trepidation, for those who don't believe in Jesus Christ, they have every reason to do so. Jesus will come as king and judge. The world we live in will change. It is not a world that we can hold on to, nor would we want to hold on to, considering what is waiting for us when the Savior returns.

## II.

**A.** Signs are given for a reason. They point to something important that is about to happen. It would be easy to simply get caught up in the signs as they are seen, but they are an indication that everything is about to take place.

In order to illustrate Jesus tells the parable we heard in the gospel of Mark last week. The sprouting of leaves is an indication in their year that summer was soon to occur. Jesus says these signs point to the fact that, “So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.”

**B.** In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther says that the kingdom of God comes “when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe his holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.” There are three kingdoms that Scripture refers to; one is his kingdom in the world that is one that is already here. The second kingdom is in his church, which has to do with his word and our belief in it. Not only do we believe it but also we are to support it and bring others into. Finally we anticipate the third kingdom and that is in heaven. That third kingdom is the one we anticipate with his return again.

God’s timing is always right and these signs bring it about. St. Paul says, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5) As Jesus mentions time and time again, God is the only one who knows what that time is.

As you see these signs around you in the world, you can be assured that the end is near. No one can predict it though many have tried in former years, in the present, or in the future. Only God knows, but he has given us the means to be prepared for this return of Christ once again and that is

his word that Jesus will be the judge at the last day. (John 12:48)

### III.

**A.** In our world there is plenty to distract us from that however. This season provides us with many. There are many fine customs that we have, but if they become our only focus we could be unprepared for his coming again. Verses 34 says, “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”

Faith is the key. These are tough times that we live in. If we look at them only in the events themselves we can lose our focus. Colonel Davenport was the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives: On May 19, 1780 the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Halting the clamor for immediate adjournment, Davenport rose and said, “The day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish for candles to be brought.” Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we can be lights as we watch and wait in faith.

**B.** In this way, we stand in the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. The world may tremble and fear. We can remain steady in hope and faith. When Jesus comes again what we have hoped for will finally come about. When Jesus first came he brought joy on the first Christmas. When he comes again he will bring joy again. In the mean time we live between those two joys as we live in his word and promises. In Jesus’ name. Amen.