

## **Waiting Without Worry – Your Redemption is Near!**

23<sup>rd</sup> Sun. after Pent. – 11/16/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 21:5-28 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 9, [Jesus said,] **“And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place...”**.

v. 28, **“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”**

### **Introduction**

✧ How many of you have ever found yourself listening to a person explaining something – maybe an event or an episode in a book or a movie – but that person is giving so many details and taking so long just to paint the background of the story that you get a little frustrated? Maybe you are even tempted to just blurt out, “What’s the point?!”

➔ In a sense, the Gospel Reading before us today is a bit like that. Jesus spends 24 verses describing what things will be like as the end of time approaches; when He is going to come to proclaim His judgment against all sin and unbelief and take His own believers to be with Him in the glories of heaven.

➔ Part of the struggle with this text though is not only that the details describing the end are a bit long for our short sound-bite minds to stay focused upon, but that they are also a bit hard to understand.

✧ And no wonder – because what Jesus is describing here is going to be an event like no other ... ever! I mean, if we’re honest, it’s hard enough to view and understand fully all of the things around us right now; before the time of Jesus’ return; all of the intricacies of nature; the vast array of stars in the heavens; the complicated interactions between and among our fellow human beings; the ways that our bodies work.

➔ How much harder, then, is it going to be for you and me, as simple-minded human beings to get some sort of grip on what it will be like, on that Day; at the very end of time as we currently know it, when Jesus returns and gathers all people around the world before Him.

### **I. Coming Events Can Make Us Lose Our Focus**

✧ You see, one of the challenges with a passage like this, is for us to figure out which parts of this description are most important for us to focus in on and which parts may fit better under the category of “background information.”

➔ Clearly, there are some specifics here that the Holy Spirit intends for all of us to hold onto as critical for us as Christians, so that we remain close to Jesus in our faith while we remain here on earth and especially for when it comes time for His return and the final judgment of all souls.

✧ In fact, for those of us who have been engaging with John in the book of Revelation during our Sunday morning Bible Study, this passage from Jesus has a similar feel to it, doesn’t it? Jesus is trying to convey cosmic and worldly events and truths with hugely important consequences for all of us, that are, in essence, beyond our ability to ever understand.

➔ So let’s be clear here. Some of the details described in this text by Jesus are not nearly as critical for us to focus our attention upon as it is for us to be unwavering in our faith-connection to our Savior Jesus; regardless of the earth-shattering events that we already see or will see in the future around us or in the news. Even when it seems like the world and the social structures are falling apart around us, Jesus ... and only Jesus must be the one to whom we hold fast; must be the only One to keep and guide us all of the way through life until the end.

- ✧ So, in order to help us keep our eyes and faith fixed on Jesus, let's focus, just for a bit, on a few particular words in this passage, especially verses 25-28 at the end of our Gospel Reading. And let's see what they have to guide us this morning.
  - ➔ Luke says, "There will be signs" (v.25) at the very end; great and terrible things that everyone will see; things like roaring sounds of a sea; people fainting from fear. Even the very "powers of the heavens will be shaken" (v.26). These are catastrophic changes in the sky that indicate that the world is coming unglued; God's orderly creation will be reverting back toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw His protective and nurturing control. There is no question – to see and experience these things will be enough to unhinge the bravest of souls; those who might seem to us to be impossible to fluster or fear right now.
  - ➔ Jesus says that these "signs" will point all people – believer and unbeliever alike to the fact that this will be the beginning of the end of time as we now know it. And then all people around the world will see Jesus coming; coming in power and unspeakable glory. Other places in the New Testament describe Jesus' arrival as having all of the angels with Him; of trumpets blowing; of a great light shining, and so on. It will for sure be an event that no one will miss; like nothing ever seen before!
- ✧ Just a cursory consideration of these words can be enough to make a person shudder. Earthquakes, great thundering and storms the likes of which have never occurred; even the heavens that seem to be untouchable are losing their structure – it's enough to make any normal person afraid.

## **II. For believers in Jesus, Redemption is Near**

- ✧ But here's the critical point for us this morning, as believers in Jesus, you and I are not "any normal person" are we? Will these things that Jesus is describing be different for us believers than they will be for the unbeliever?
  - ➔ The unbeliever, who sees these "signs" will now sense that his accountability to God is coming due; that he never did enough to satisfy God's holy demands; even worse, that now he has to face the fact in front of him that he rejected this Jesus who now gathers all souls before Him to be judged – this is the person that verse 26 says will be "fainting with fear." Reality of what is the indisputable truth about his eternal outcome will hit him/her at the core and bring them down in their own despair.
  - ➔ In contrast to that, Jesus says in verse 28, "straighten up and raise your heads." Those who are believers in Christ, we will stand up tall and raise our heads; focused unswervingly upon Jesus, in whom we have placed every ounce of our trust.
  - ➔ How can you and I trust in Jesus this way? because Jesus is the One who fulfilled every one of His promises to save us; by paying the full debt of our overwhelming guilt and sin when He died on the cross. We believers trust Jesus to keep us in His saving faith until the very end. Beyond all of the natural and geopolitical and unprecedented disasters and traumas that we see and hear about, we know that what is most important is that Jesus will come and retrieve us from this vale of trauma and trial and take us into Himself; into the glories beyond all glories; into eternity with Him in heaven!
- ✧ What's interesting here is the way that Jesus grabs our attention as believers in verse 28. He says, "Because your redemption is drawing near" – present tense. What exactly is redemption? It can be understood in a couple of different ways.
  - ➔ Technically, redemption comes from the root word "to redeem," which means to "buy back" that which was lost or stolen. So, it is paying the price to gain freedom from that which has bound or enslaved us. You and I and all of humankind lost our freedom when Adam and Eve

sinned against God. What they did was make all of their descendants to be self-centered sinners just like them. Everyone has been born a slave to his/her sinful condition; a slavery from which no person is capable of freeing oneself on his/her own.

- ✘ So when we think of the redemption that frees us, as believers, from that slavery to sin, we really have two redemptions. Well, maybe three.

- ➔ The first is when Jesus sacrificed His own life to pay our sin-debt; the debt that every person of all places and all times has accrued against God. That redemption; that payment took place 2000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross.

- ➔ The second redemption takes place when each individual person becomes a believer; when he first begins to trust in the One and only Redeemer of souls, Jesus. That typically comes about through the washing of water with the Word of God in Baptism or when a person hears of the saving work of Jesus in Holy Scripture and receives the free gift of faith. That redemption stays with the believer from that time forward. But when he/she dies, the soul must still be redeemed from the grave; from the bonds of death.

- ➔ And that then is the third redemption; when the believer is physically raised from the dead and goes to be with Jesus forevermore. So, for every believer in Christ, redemption is truly near, because by the faith given through the Spirit, it is only a matter of time until this final redemption is entirely completed.

### **III. So, We Face the End, Standing with Heads Raised**

- ✘ Last year, a movie came out entitled *The Firing Squad*. It recounts the true-life story of a drug dealer in Indonesia, facing death by firing squad after he has been caught. Several times in his life he had come in contact with people who wanted him to become a believer in Jesus.

- ➔ But for him, life as a drug dealer was too good to consider that. The things of this world; lavish living, more money than could be counted, power and all that came with it, made believing in Jesus seem foolish. But, during his time in prison believers spoke to him often about Jesus. And as the time of his execution came closer, the beauty of the lives of those who confessed their faith to him caused him to begin to explore the Bible. That truth of God's Holy Word, brought him to faith so that he also demonstrated the words of this passage from Jesus when it came time for his execution. At the moment he faced the firing squad, he did not slump down in guilt or fear or shame, but he stood up straight and raised his head high. He knew that his final redemption was indeed near. He had no fear of death, for in faith, he knew that his death was the door by which he would go to be with Jesus forever!

- ✘ As you and I ponder our own end my friends, it might bring a bit of fear. After all, it's not something any of us are able to experience or rehearse ahead of time. When that day comes, it's going to be brand new; something that we have never faced before.

- ➔ Yet, because God the Spirit has remade us into people who are now counted as holy by the blood of Jesus; because He is with us at all times in the power and grace of our baptism; and because our sin-debt against God has been paid by the blood of Jesus, there is no reason – no reason at all for us to fear Christ's return or our death either. In the grace of Jesus, our only real response to the end of this earthly existence is an overwhelming, eager anticipation to be with Jesus!

- ✘ Yes my fellow Christians, your redemption is near; as near as your own deaths or as near as the approaching Last Day.

- ➔ For whether your time to meet Jesus is soon or still a long way off, He, your Redeemer, is always near – with us and in us. All we can ever do is thank God for His gift of faith and for the home He has already prepared for us in His Son, Jesus. To God be all the glory. Amen.