

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Last Sunday of Pentecost  
Saturday, November 20, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, November 21, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Words Will Not Pass Away”

Mark 13:24-37

Last week, we heard the first part of Jesus answering the disciple’s question: “when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” Like most people, the disciples were interested in knowing when all this is going to come to an end. Walking around the Temple in Jerusalem and marveling at the massive stones and magnificent buildings, Jesus told them there would come a day when not one stone will be left upon another.

Again, it is important to remember that, in answering their question about when this would happen, Jesus really answers two questions because the destruction of Jerusalem will not be the destruction of the world. He tells them of the destruction of Jerusalem which will happen in 70 AD. And we hear Him say in our Gospel reading today, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

“But concerning that (last) day or that (last) hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Jesus has yielded the authority to determine the time of the end of the world to His Father in heaven.

He alone has set that date. So if anyone tells you that they have inside information or received a prophetic vision of when that will happen, that is pretty much the definition of blasphemy – making yourself equal to God.

Throughout this month of November, beginning with All Saints' Day, we have been focusing our attention on the End Times, the Second Coming of Christ, and our relationship to the saints in heaven who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Since we obviously cannot know when Judgment Day will come, it is more useful to spend this final Sunday of the Church Year pondering just what that day will look like. We get a few glimpse's of that day throughout Scripture. Jesus offers us the image of Him dividing the sheep and the goats. To the sheep, He says, "Come, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you," and to the goats, He will say, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25: 34, 41).

John's Revelation gives us insight into what the throne room of God looks like – at least in earthly terms in which John can describe it. Paul tells us of his vision of heaven and simply says that there are things he would love to tell you, but there simply are not words to describe it. What will heaven and eternity in the resurrection look like? We get a few glimpse's, but mostly, all that we can do is speculate. The one thing that is certain from what Scripture tells us is that Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is present with His saints.

However, I believe there is no more impactful and clear image of actual Judgment Day than in the vision of Daniel which we read today. It is a court of Law. It is an official proceeding. There is a reason that when we speak of being saved by grace through faith alone – it is a gift from God – not by works; that we are saved solely through the guilt of our sin being covered by the blood of Christ; there is a reason that we call this Justification.

We are justified in the sight of God, because the Ancient of Day has our name in the Lamb's Book of Life and we have been declared "not guilty" on all charges.

The image of the throne room in Daniel 7 is amazing: "thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him; a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened."

What a scene! But it's not just the fire and the countless multitude of all mankind that will be present that garners attention. It's the last phrase that should really get our attention: "the books were opened." There is more than just one book. We hear of the Lamb's Book of Life seven times in the New Testament (Six times in John's Revelation and Paul mentions "the book of life" in Philippians).

Jesus tells us that on the Last Day, those who are being judged will have to give an account for “every careless word they have spoken” [Mt. 12:36]. Every last sin will be remembered against them. How will this take place? John tells us in his Revelation: “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done [Rev. 20:11-12].

David, following the Bathsheba/Uriah the Hittite incident offers his prayer of repentance in Ps. 51: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.” Peter preaches in Acts 3: “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

Our words will not simply pass away unless they are blotted out by God – which is why we need to be very aware of what comes out of our mouth. God takes words very seriously – particularly His Name.

Thanks be to God that “His words will never pass away,” as Jesus tells us. His words create faith. His words hold a promise of life which is secure. His word of promise is that He will blot out the iniquity, blot out the guilt of all whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Amen.