

LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR 11/25/18

Mount Calvary, West View

ISAIAH 51: 4-6, JUDE 20-25, MARK 13: 24-37

HYMNS: ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME LSB #549,

CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS LSB #525,

BAPTISMAL WATERS COVER ME LSB #616,

O WORD OF GOD INCARNATE LSB #523

Theme: Crown Him with Many Crowns

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is from the continuation of Saint Mark's Gospel, the 13th Chapter:

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Church Year is coming to a close. Technically, on Saturday at 23:59:59, it will strike the final second of this current year and at Midnight, Sunday will precisely start the new Advent season, God willing. So today, we contemplate the end of time. Last Sunday, we addressed the signs that will keep on reminding us of Christ's return, and the continuing opportunities given to us, for we must tell people all about Jesus ó it is a compulsion ingrained in each believer to want to seek and to save that which is lost. At this point I would be remiss if I did not remember John Allen Chau, that missionary killed by the Sentinelese people who apparently had no contact with Jesus, and still perhaps not. We can debate all day long about the way he went about his missionary work, but the drive and the passion is the same of every Christian: People ó every person ó needs to know Jesus for Salvation. Period. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and without Him, no one can be saved.

How perilous is this? We have another reminder of what the end will be like. We see that the

time, the final hour of Jesus' return, cannot be deciphered by any man - not even by the Son of God as He dwells on this earth accomplishing the Father's task. Only the Father knows the time, and He is not revealing this to us, so what are we to do as we wait for Jesus? Three things Jesus commands of us as His faithful children awaiting His return: Be on guard! Be alert! Watch!

As you may have noticed, these are similar commands given to sentries guarding a fortress. Guarding the inside from the forces that our outside. Being alert to the dangers that are out there so that the forces of the enemy do not sneak up upon the garrison unawares. Watching constantly, for the sentry is to watch over the sleeping platoon that they may rest and be ready for battle. The sentry is not allowed to sleep or rest; his time of rest will be when he is relieved of his duty.

Being on guard is the first command from Christ to His children. But what are we to be guarding ourselves from? Well, since we do not know when the hour will arrive that the sun will cease to exist, the moon darkened, and the Son of Man descending to take all His elect to heaven, we need to guard ourselves from the sloth-like attitude that Jesus is slow in returning. The Jews had this problem and were running to any and every Messiah who claimed to be such hoping he was "the one" so they could have the salvation promised in Isaiah, the set justice for a light to the peoples. Isaiah was 600 years or so prior, and it was about time for the Messiah to show, but when Jesus did not "fit" their understanding of THE Messiah, they looked for another and still do. We need to be on guard, alert, watch and pray that we do not fall into such traps looking for the coming of The Christ, and run to every David Koresh and Jim Jones claiming to be the returned Christ, and fall short of the Glory of God. If there seems to be a delay in the coming of The Christ, it is because God the Father is still giving men the opportunity to repent, and more importantly, God is giving us more opportunity to show compassion and mercy on others who still fear the end of times, and to reveal to them the love of Christ. This is repeated in our Epistle reading today, ***Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear,***

hating even the garment stained by the flesh. "

This flows then to the Second Command of Jesus is to be alert. This is a strong command, in that we know that as sinful human beings, we are prone to laziness, and sleepiness, not just in the work that God gives us to do, but also lazy in being aware of the evil one attempting to deceive us. Jesus just got done explaining that no one knows the moment that He will come again - they can't even come close! Yet, as we wait for the day to come, how many "prophets" and "soothsayers" have been declaring that they just know when Jesus is coming! It is hard not to be intrigued as to how they come to this conclusion, and there are even some who go so far as to get suckered in by these smooth-talking serpents. Therefore, Jesus exhorts us to be aware when this happens, to not fall away. Not only be aware of this temptation, but in the face of every temptation, we are commanded to be aware. It is ever so easy in this current era of the end of times, to just look the other way in the face of temptations, to just assume that we can withstand all the arrows of the evil one, or to expect that God will forgive because He understands how hard it is to resist the devil. Or worse yet, people can be saved if they never had the chance to know Jesus. That is why Jesus exhorts us again to be alert. Alert to the Word that compels us to act in faith & believe and spread the great knowledge of the King Who reigns and offers forgiveness to all who are baptized and believe!

The final thing Jesus commands of us, is to keep watch. We just do not know the time He will come. Jesus may come in the morning, the afternoon, the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or even at dawn. The parable Jesus gives to us may sound cryptic, "It is like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task. He especially tells the one at the door, to keep watch." But this is the reality that you and I are in right now. The Man has gone away from the earth in a visible way: Jesus Christ. And He has appointed His servants, His Elect, that is you and me and all believers in Christ, to continue their assigned tasks.

And as for the one at the door with the great command to keep watch? That is also you. "But pastor, this is too much to bear! How can I do this all? How can I keep from sleeping? As a sentry for God watching out for the deceit of the evil one, there are so many times that I do not recognize the temptation he assaults me with until it's too late! I cannot fight the devil who surrounds me on all sides! Where is the relief for my weary and downtrodden soul?" Take comfort, my friends, for there still most wonderful hope! Christ is the King, and through Him we are more than conquerors! Recall what you have just sang to the glory of God. He is The One crowned Who sits on the Throne; He has His own music, the Hymns we have from historic hymnals; He is The One Who died for Thee, the matchless King through all eternity! The Virgins Son, Incarnate Born, the Babe of Bethlehem. Lord of Love, Lord of Life, Lord of Heaven, the King of all Who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die! Nowhere did we talk about how you had worked hard for Jesus to do all this for you, we sang only about His accomplishments to be the Salvation of all, and therefore, we give up our small crown, to crown Him the Great King of all!

You are not being on guard, alert, or watching to become a member of Christ's Kingdom, but because you have been baptized in the One True Faith in the Name of the Only True God with which He reveals Himself by. You are saved now by the water and the Word - and no assault of the evil one can take this away from you! Not only this, but for the very fact that Jesus went to the cross, suffered and died for your sins, and you believe in this truth, without doubt, you are already saved. So even when you do sin, as Saint John declares, "***We have an advocate, one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.***" Your salvation is secured by the suffering and shedding of Christ's Blood, so you do not keep watch in order to be saved. However, as a child of the Heavenly Father, He has seen it fit in His grand design to give you tasks worthy of your calling and ability - the responsibility that is done in gracious response to what God has already accomplished in your life. As sanctified and declared

holy, we all have no other desire but to stand guard at the fortress of our lives, to be alert to the craftiness of the tricks of the devil and all his hoards, and to willingly keep watch for our gracious Savior to return riding on the clouds with His servants, however long it takes, and do the ministry necessary for the salvation of those who need to hear and believe and be saved.

Because the Holy Ghost is working within you to increase your faith, you will not grow weary in your spiritual night-watch, for our gracious God has even supplied the nourishment for your daily struggle with sin and temptation. He gives you the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the very Spirit of God Who lives in you, Who intercedes on your behalf when you do not know what to say, Who works through you to accomplish all that is asked of you. But that's not all, Your Savior-God also gives you His Word, which is an abundant well of refreshing encouragement, that constantly reminds you of what Christ has accomplished, and comforts you with the sure knowledge that He is still faithful to His promise of returning soon. Yet this is still not all, as He gives you His very own Body and blood at the altar, for the continued nourishment that keeps you in the One True Faith, even to life everlasting.

So, may we all this day, give thanks and praise to our Lord and Savior, the great King Who has done the crowning achievement of being faithful in saving us, and is faithful to gathering us believers to be with Him in heaven. May we, with the true help of the Spirit of God, stand our guard, be alert, and keep watch; that we will no longer despair as the unbelievers do, but rejoice, and tell others, that they too may receive the same assurances from God as you now have, partaking in His crowning achievement of bring us to Himself in Heaven, as the ONLY King of kings and Lord of lords. In His most Holy Name, we give thanks for all He has done for us. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

AMEN+

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment