

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
17 November 2013  
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Mal 4.1-6; Lk 21.5-36

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

The end will be terrible.  
It'll be worse than the environmentalists think.  
More terrifying than all the sci-fi stories of zombies and vampires.  
More encompassing than Noah's flood,  
    or the Babylonian Exile,  
    or the Bubonic plague,  
    or WWII.

Malachi says,  
    *"the day is coming, burning like an oven...  
    all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble...  
    it will leave neither root nor branch."* (Mal 4:1)

And Jesus warns,  
    *"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."* (Lk 21:36)

This last day leaves no prisoners.  
No sin will be unaccounted for.  
No murderer or adulterer or liar or fornicator will go unpunished.  
No envy or gossip or lust or pride.

On that day no one will be luke-warm.  
No one will turn a blind or, or say, "I'll think about this later."  
There will be nothing better to do, no distractions, no baseball or wrestling or Chiefs games—  
    it will just be Jesus.

And that is the most terrifying thing in all the world—  
    that is, if you're standing apart from Him.

For the one outside of Christ, Jesus is the judge.  
His Word is final.

And even though in Gethsemane,  
    when He rebuked Peter for drawing the sword—  
    saying at any moment He could have 12 legions of angels ready to fight—  
    here Jesus' own sword is readied.

His judgment is at hand.  
The wicked finally have it coming.  
And on that last day, there will be no mercy.  
No second-chances, then.

Now, if you knew when that day would be—  
what would you do?

Would you go to work?  
Would you keep that diet?  
How about going to that AA meeting?

If you knew the Last Day was a week from Tuesday you'd be doing all sorts of things,  
many, I imagine, not in service to your neighbor, but in service of yourself,  
anything but trusting in the promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation

For the sake of your faith, Jesus doesn't tell you when the end will come.  
Instead, He lays out the signs and interprets them.  
He warns us that the end times will be filled with false Christs, false prophets, false religions.

These false teachers will try to scare you out of hell.  
They'll speak of fire and brimstone, and how you've failed to live this life as a Christian—  
and then they'll offer a way out—  
something you've got to do:  
steps to follow,  
decisions to make,  
experiences to feel.

And Jesus says, "*Don't worry about it, and don't be afraid.*"  
Things will go from bad to worse to even worse yet.  
Wars, persecutions, a breakdown of morality, diseases, global warming, you name it—  
Jesus says, "*Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...  
You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends,  
and some of you they will put to death.  
You will be hated by all for My name's sake.*" (Lk 21:10, 16-17)

And yet, "*Do not worry.*"  
"*When you see these things beginning to take place*"—  
these signs of the end, the distress and darkness and destruction that mark the last days—  
then "*straighten up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing  
near.*"

Did you catch that?  
Your *redemption* is drawing near—  
not your *destruction*.

As Malachi also says,  
"*But for you who fear my name,  
the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.  
You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.*" (Mal 4:2)

How do calves from the stall go out?  
 I suspect, they go out with joy.  
 Another day not being butchered.  
 Another day grazing freely on the land.  
 Another day of sunshine and warmth and joy and life.

And that's all for you.

That's what the last day will be like.  
 For those who are in Christ, united to Him in both death and resurrection,  
     the last day of judgment isn't fearful or full of doubt.  
 It's the day of Christ.

And any time we worry or doubt or tremble, it's only from our lack of faith.  
 The end times only bring anxiety when we refuse to take Jesus at His word.

Malachi says, "*Remember the law of my servant Moses.*" (Mal 4:4)  
 If you knew the world would end a week from Tuesday, stay in the Word.  
 Keep serving your neighbor.  
 Live selflessly; love your wife; teach your children; clock in at work; and trust Christ.

For He is coming soon,  
     even as He comes *now* in bread and wine and Word for you.

Your redemption is drawing near even as it has already come in your baptism,  
     where you were united with Christ.

Your Jesus is drawing near.  
 Heaven and earth will pass away;  
     but His words will never pass away.

His words of forgiveness, life, and salvation spoken to you will never pass away.  
 And neither will you.  
     Not a hair of your head will perish.

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