

Sunday, November 13, 2022 – Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

The end is near. There is no doubt about it. The warnings are dire. The tone of today's texts is ominous. But the baptized know how to live in the meantime. The baptized are strengthened for the living of these days in word and sacrament. The baptized rally around the invitation of the apostle: "Do not be weary in doing what is right."

Prayer of the Day

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Embrace us with your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide, we may live through what is temporary without losing what is eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 65:17-25

Addressing the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, the prophet proclaims a vision of a future time of peace and prosperity. Though the returned exiles are experiencing hard times, God is about to do a new thing.

¹⁷For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.

¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.

¹⁹I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.

²⁰No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

²¹They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²²They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—
and their descendants as well.

²⁴Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

²⁵The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,

Psalm-reading: Isaiah 12:2-6

²Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become | my salvation.

³**With joy you | will draw water
from the wells | of salvation.**

⁴And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call | on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that this name | is
exalted.

⁵**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.**

⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Some members of the Thessalonian community, because of their belief in the nearness of Christ's return, had ceased to work, living off the generosity of other members of the community. The writer of this letter warns them bluntly that if they want to eat, they need to work.

⁶Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

As history moves toward God's fulfillment there will be frightening signs and events. Before the end, believers will draw strength from their relationship to God and will be given the words they need to testify and to endure without fear.

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, [Jesus] said, ⁶"As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

⁷They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" ⁸And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

⁹"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹²"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls."

Prayers of Intercession

United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world, saying “God, in your mercy,” and responding, “receive our prayer.”

A brief silence.

Reviving God, keep your church active in its mission and ministry. Encourage bishops, deacons, pastors, and lay leaders to risk boldly in their proclamation and fill them with wisdom and endurance for challenging times. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, as the northern hemisphere prepares for winter, make us mindful of the ordered beauty of your creation. Teach us to treasure cycles of rest and new life. Help us care for what you have made. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Loving God, accompany all who make sacrifices for the sake of others. Safeguard first responders and active duty military personnel. Grant peace to veterans and heal any wounds in body, mind, or spirit. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Healing God, your people cry out to you. Sustain doctors, nurses, and hospital personnel in their tireless work. Uphold mental health professionals and those in their care. May the sun of righteousness rise on all who are sick (*especially*). God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Uniting God, unite this assembly in its shared mission and ministry for the sake of the gospel (*specific ministries or initiatives may be named*). Highlight ways we can better work together and give us patience to work through disagreement. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Consoling God, abide with all who grieve for loved ones who have died (*especially*). Comfort us with the promise of resurrection and new life with you. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Accept these prayers, gracious God, and those known only to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

A reflection for this Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost...

From Life to Death and Death to Life

In our baptisms we move *spiritually from death to life*. We are reminded of this in the words from the service of Holy Baptism: “In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 227). We begin in death, and grace raises us to life. Still, we tend to focus on the spiritual nature of this change or transformation.

It is easy to forget that by the very nature of that baptism, we can in an instant move *physically from life to death* for the sake of the life we are gifted with in baptism. We hear the words of promise and trust in the gifts and blessings of baptism, but overlook the accompanying responsibility. Like a teenager with a brand new driver’s license we relish our newfound freedom and may forget all those other drivers on the road whose safety depends upon the new driver.

The new life we receive in baptism is a life that is lived to God each day. On any given day we may be called upon to renounce, in some way, the God we serve and love. On any given day, we may be called upon to stand up for life—or for a life, or for *our own* life—or for someone’s freedom or safety, or for love, perhaps even under threat of death. Many around the world live that kind of life every day for the sake of the gospel. Jesus encouraged disciples to always be ready for the tests and trials that will somehow surely come. As we grow in the obedience, courage, patience, and love we need to keep the faith in difficult times.

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