

Last Sunday of the Church Year

November 21, 2021

INTROIT Ps. 39:4–5a, 7–8, 12a;
antiphon: 2 Peter 3:13b NIV

We are looking forward to a new heaven and a | new earth,*
the home of | righteousness.

O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure | of my days;*
let me know how fleeting | I am!

Behold, you have made my days a few | handbreadths,*
and my lifetime is as nothing be- | fore you.

And now, O Lord, for what | do I wait?*

My hope | is in you.
Deliver me from all my trans- | gressions.*

Do not make me the scorn | of the fool!
Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear | to my cry;*

hold not your peace | at my tears!

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

We are looking forward to a new heaven and a | new earth,*
the home of | righteousness.

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, so govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your glorious return, we may persevere in both faith and holiness of living; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GRADUAL Rev. 7:14b; Ps. 84:5

These are the ones coming out of the great tribu- | lation.*

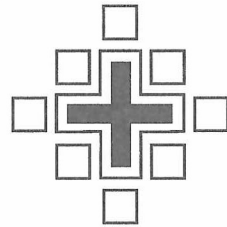
They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood | of the Lamb.
Blessèd are those whose strength is | in you,*
in whose heart are the highways to | Zion.

DAILY READINGS

November 21: Dan. 2:1–23; Rev. 18:1–24; **22:** Dan. 2:24–49; Rev. 19:1–21; **23:** Dan. 3:1–30; Rev. 20:1–15; **24:** Dan. 4:1–37; Rev. 21:1–8; **25:** Dan. 5:1–30; Rev. 21:9–27; **26:** Dan. 6:1–28; Rev. 22:1–21; **27:** Is. 1:1–28; 1 Peter 1:1–12.

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Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 51:4–6

4 “Give attention to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go out from me,
and I will set my justice for a
light to the peoples.

5 My righteousness draws near,
my salvation has gone out,
and my arms will judge the
peoples;

the coastlands hope for me,
and for my arm they wait.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a
garment,
and they who dwell in it will die
in like manner;

but my salvation will be forever,
and my righteousness will never
be dismayed.”

Epistle: Jude 20–25

20But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22And have mercy on those who doubt; 23save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

24Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Holy Gospel: Mark 13:24–37

24[Jesus said:] “In those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27And 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.

28“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—36lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

The Majestic Voice of the Lord

The LORD will cause His majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of His arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones. (Isaiah 30:30)

As every mother and father knows from experience, the children do not always listen well the first time. The parent speaks softly at first but then must gradually get louder and more emphatic as long as the children persist in pretending not to hear. Sometimes, Mom or Dad gets pretty loud and scary!

The Lord of hosts can get far louder than any parent. Our God is also infinitely more patient. Through the preaching of His Scriptures and the administration of His sacraments, our heavenly Father speaks softly now, quietly calling us to repentance and gently restoring us in the faith. The preached Word and the administration of the sacraments are like “the sound of a low whisper” that Elijah heard (1 Kings 19:12); through these things, God speaks in a gentle, appealing manner. Through these things, the Word of the Lord has also gone out into all the world. “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18). Through the Holy Christian Church on earth, the voice of God’s grace in Christ now gently calls in every corner of the globe.

Some people pretend not to hear. Even some of our closest, dearest loved ones pretend not to hear. They will eventually hear. “The Lord will cause His majestic voice to be heard.” Like an angry parent whose patience has expired, the Lord of hosts will at last get the undivided attention of those who pretend not to hear. “He will speak to them in His wrath and terrify them in His fury” (Psalm 2:5). That will not be a good day for those children.

Martin Luther felt frustrated by his God-given task of speaking the divine Word to people. Some people gladly

listened, while others pretended not to hear. Concerning those who refused to hear, Luther complained: “I can get no farther than their ears; their hearts I cannot reach” (LW 51:76). What did Luther do in response to his frustration? He kept speaking! Moved by compassion toward his neighbor and duty toward his calling, Luther persisted in speaking, even while many of his hearers persisted in ignoring.

Not everyone is called to be a pastor, ascending the pulpit and proclaiming the Word in public worship. Every Christian is, however, given the Word of the Lord to speak to our neighbor. “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Romans 10:8). Do not give up on your dearest loved ones. Keep demonstrating God’s patience toward them; keep watching for opportunities to speak the comforts of Christ to them. It is not necessary for us to thunder God’s wrath upon them. God will thunder His wrath soon enough! Simply show them the path to repentance. Speak God’s Word “by the open statement of the truth” (2 Corinthians 4:2), both warning of God’s anger and extolling God’s forgiveness in Christ. Your words and my words can go only as far as the ears; God’s powerful Words can make it to the heart.

When we persist in speaking now, we are exercising God’s mercy and grace toward others. The Lord will eventually speak on His own, without our help. He “will cause His majestic voice to be heard.”

Author: Rev. Erik Rottmann

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