

Advent 1A
November 27, 2016
Matthew 24:37-44
Just Another Day At First
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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

People were jostling and bargaining in the market place. And then it happened. A mother and her daughter were playing a game around the table at home. And then it happened. A giant tsunami approached from the distance as the springs of the earth opened up, and God opened the floodgates of the heavens for 40 days and 40 nights.

We saw these depictions of the Flood in its suddenness and unexpectedness on our visit a week ago to the Creation Museum. People are doing those very things this morning most likely. Today started out as other Sundays as we prepared and came to church. Nothing out of the ordinary at present.

Could today be the day the trumpet sounds and we behold the Son of Man “sitting at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven?”[Matt. 26:64] As the billboard along the side of the highway asks, “Are you ready?”

It was true of the day the Son of God was born as Jesus of Nazareth behind the inn in Bethlehem. It will be true when the Son of God and Son of Man returns in all his glory to judge. It will be **Just Another Day At First**. It is a day that brought separation. It is a day that requires readiness.

Some things we expect and have planned for today. Loved ones head for home after the holiday. We will set out more leftover turkey for lunch or supper. What about tomorrow? The sun will rise. It is back to school, back to work, back to the routine. The sun will set. We foresee the ordinary ebb and flow of life.

That is what the people in Noah’s day expected in the days before the Flood began. “People were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to day Noah entered the ark.” They who had not heeded God’s Word nor believed God’s promise of the Savior perished. God separated them from him forever in eternal damnation. Only believers, Noah and his family, eight in all were saved. This was a day that brought separation.

God had established his covenant with Noah and his family and saved them through the waters of the flood. Peter compares those flood waters to the water of holy baptism connected to the gospel; the power of Christ that separates us from unbelievers, and saves us by lifting us up above their separation from God. [1 Pt 3]

In Noah’s day God saved those who believed and left behind those who did not believe. For his Second Advent Jesus used the picture of two men working in a field and two women grinding with a hand mill. When Jesus comes at the end of the world in judgment, he will take believers into heaven and leave behind unbelievers in eternal condemnation in hell.

This separation between believers and unbelievers, “one will be taken and the other left,” will not take place in a millennial rapture prior to the final judgment a thousand years later. It will take place at the one time general resurrection of all people on the day of judgment.

The Holy Scriptures tie together “the End Time” and “Advent.” Just a reminder, Advent is not Christmas. Advent is the preparation of repentance to welcome Jesus born as our Savior from

sin, and repentance in readiness to stand in the final judgment covered in his blood and righteousness through faith.

Advent is about Jesus coming into the world at Bethlehem, Jesus' coming into our hearts through the gospel in Word and sacrament, and his coming again. Readiness for all those advents will prevent us from being taken unawares and unprepared. It is no longer just another day after Jesus comes to us.

To make his point about readiness, our Savior used the illustration of the homeowner who did not take the necessary precautions against a thief, "If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into." His lack of readiness was costly in the loss of material goods. It pales in comparison to laxity in spiritual matters.

We do know Jesus Second Advent is for sure. It is for sure because his first advent happened as God promised and prepared people. The birth of Jesus as the Christ was well documented in the pages of Old Testament prophecy. His first coming separates those who believed in him, and those who did not. Even Christmas today causes that distinction between those who understand the real meaning of Jesus' birth, and those who do not. We will not be taken by surprise when Jesus comes in glory as if we had no advance notice. No more than anyone should be surprised at his birth, or that the purpose of the gospel is not to make us better people but to make us God's people.

When our family comes down to visit from Wisconsin, they text us from Merrillville, about two hours left in the trip. We pretty much know their arrival time and can be ready. Neither God nor the angels will give such advance notice. The Lord wants us always ready and waiting. Jesus' return is imminent, i.e. it can take place at any time.

Our readiness to celebrate Jesus' birth, to hear the gospel, and to hear the trumpet sound is daily repentance. This daily repentance and drowning of our Old Adam in the waters of our Holy Baptism will prevent the thief, Satan, from robbing us of our spiritual treasures. The resurrected and reigning Christ told the apostle John in the Revelation to pen this to the church in Sardis, "Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you." [Rev. 3:3]

There is grave danger in spiritual apathy and procrastination. In a different but parallel context, President Andrew Jackson said in his farewell address of 1837, "But you must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you want to secure the blessing."

In the context of Jesus second coming, we would say that eternal vigilance is the price of eternal salvation in heaven. We must pay that price if we want to secure that blessing. The apostle Paul put it this way to the Romans, "So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

November 27, 2016 has started out as just another day at first. Now it is not. We have begun our preparation for the birth of our Savior. We have heard and receive the gospel of our forgiveness in Jesus' life and death as our Savior. Quite possibly our Lord's return will take place. If not today, then tomorrow. If not tomorrow, any day now. We pray with the rest of the church that his coming is soon to take us out of this world to himself in heaven. "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly, and find us, your people watchful and ready. Amen. <SDG>