

# Populus Zion – The Second Sunday in Advent

Luke 21:25-36

December 6, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I once had a brilliant but highly erratic professor tell us at the beginning of the quarter that there would be a test on certain material. “When is the test going to be?” “Sometime this quarter,” he replied.

Seriously? He’s not giving us a date? How am I supposed to get ready for *that*? “How much of this will be on the test?” “All of it.” A week or three went by, and there was no more mention of it. Most of the students assumed he’d forgotten about it, and so stopped studying. It was a lot of material. If you were going to be ready, you’d need to be working at it every day.

The test is coming, but you don’t know when. Unless, of course, you subscribe to the theory that he’s a forgetful old professor and the test is just a myth.

It wasn’t a myth. The day finally came when the prof walked in and started passing out the exam. Howls of protest went up, students muttering about how unfair it all was, that the professor hadn’t given adequate warning. “I told you at the beginning!”

The Day of the Lord is coming, the day of judgment. There won’t be a test; the kingdom of God has no entrance quiz. Sins—*your* sins—are atoned for in the death of Jesus. But for those who reject that, those who eschew repentance and live as if God did not matter and as if they mattered most, that day will come as a snare, a trap, an unexpected day of judgment and wrath. I’m sure the cry will go up, “You did not warn us!”

But the warning is clear in the words of Jesus: **“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.”**

The season of Advent is particularly the time for disciples of Jesus to be reminded that our lives will come to an end, perhaps sooner than we

imagine; and the world will come to an end, perhaps sooner than we imagine. Your inbox will still be full, tasks uncompleted, emails and texts still unanswered. And it doesn't matter. One thing matters: **“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”**

How can we be “counted worthy”? That sounds like there is something you need to do, something you need to accomplish, so the Lord will count you worthy. Whenever we come to a difficult passage of Scripture, or something we don't understand, we must apply this little rule: *Scripture interprets Scripture*. We interpret the difficult passages in Scripture in light of the clear ones. And Scripture is very clear on the matter of human worthiness, as it is written in Psalm 130: **“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand?”** God is not Santa. If there were a naughty and nice list, no one would be in the *nice* column. No one stands before God because of how much good he has done. No one stands before God because of how much sin he has avoided. No one stands before God because of the amount of his offerings or sacrifices or the amount of emotion he has felt. Good works are good, avoiding sin is good, tithes and offerings likewise are good fruits born from a good tree. But they do not make you worthy to stand. Nothing you do can make you worthy. **“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But,”** the Psalm continues, **“with You there is forgiveness, therefore You are feared,”** i.e., therefore we honor and worship You.

Mark well the word Jesus uses to comfort us in the face of a pandemic, bad government, ecological disaster, a cosmos breaking apart, a world coming undone. When everything is in chaos, when people are frantic and having panic attacks because the end has come, Jesus says straighten up and lift up your heads – why? Because your **redemption** draws near. See how our Lord Jesus cannot discuss judgment without discussing redemption? To be redeemed is to be rescued as a slave from bondage, as a prisoner from the dungeon. You cannot effect your escape, you cannot purchase your freedom. You were redeemed not with gold or silver, but, the Scripture says, with the

holy and precious blood of Jesus as a lamb without blemish or spot. Your redemption depends on Jesus, not yourself. Your standing before the Son of Man on the day of judgment depends on Jesus, not yourself.

And that's what faith is, saying "I trust in Jesus and not myself for salvation. In the day of chaos and fear, the day of apocalypse and judgment and the end of all things, I am confident that my Jesus is my Redeemer." That is what carries you through this day and the next, as you bear your crosses.

Everything has been accomplished already, Jesus is your redemption and your worthiness and your salvation, therefore what if your body is wasting away, what if your life is not as you had once hoped, what if the demons of hell itself come against you? The disciple of Jesus simply says, "I am baptized, I am a child of God, what can man or death or devils do to me? Nothing. Though the earth give way, though war rise against me, though Satan accuse me, though my flesh waste away and senses fail, I have lost nothing. I am baptized, I have forgiveness in Jesus, and therefore I stand against all of this and say, 'Behold, my Redeemer comes for me and His whole Church.'"

So don't let carousing and drunkenness, drinking parties and making a good impression distract you from what matters. Don't let your lusts carry you away from your Lord and His Word. Don't let the cares of this life weigh you down so you forget the One who cares for you.

The return of Christ is drawing near, and you are made ready by abiding in Jesus, living in and from the Word He speaks to you and the Sacrament by which He joins Himself to you.

The Day is coming. We don't know when, but we have been warned, and we will prepare. Repent, receive His forgiveness, and say with fervor those ancient words that close the Scriptures: "*Come, Lord Jesus!*"

In the Name of Jesus.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.