

BULLETIN TEMPLATE: Minnesota Valley Church
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
Date: Sunday, November 28, 2021
Church Year Date: 1st Sunday in Advent

Prelude: Rebekah Olson

Hymn #149 “Thanks to God for My Redeemer”

Responsive Reading: Psalm 25:1-9

P: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;

C: in you I trust, O my God.

Do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

P: No one whose hope is in you
will ever be put to shame,
but they will be put to shame
who are treacherous without excuse.

C: Show me your ways, O LORD,
teach me your paths;

P: guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

C: Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.

P: Remember not the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you are good, O LORD.

C: Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

ALL: He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.

Hymn #1 “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

Children’s Sermon & First Advent Candle Reading

Old Testament Lesson: *Jeremiah 33:14-16* “The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. 15 “In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’

Epistle Lesson: *1 Thessalonians 3:9-13* How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. 11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: Apostles' Creed- *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

Announcements

Praise and Worship Songs: "Emmanuel" Rebekah Olson will do it this time.

Message: "JESUS IS COMING SOON"
Luke 21:25-36; Pastor Tom Olson; November 28, 2021

DEATHS: After Ray Holmberg passed away at the Waconia Hospital, his sister Barb Olson and her husband Jerry and I found a consultation room to sit and talk. Barb said that she will miss her good talks with him because he was an extremely intelligent person. But we did both agree that now he is at peace, because he was very well versed in the news of our day and the direction of our nation and world was very troubling to him. He is in the presence of the sovereign God and his Christ. Ephesians 1:19-22 puts it this way that ***"...His power, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God put everything under His feet..."*** Ray can now see how it is all working out from heaven's perspective. He can greet martyrs who are being put to death for their faith and enter heaven in an honored way. And he can anticipate returning with Jesus Christ to earth as our Epistle text mentions he will. ***1 Thessalonians 3:13 "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes WITH ALL HIS HOLY ONES."***

JESUS IS COMING SOON...that is the message of our gospel text. You might say it has been a long time since he was here. Well not for the one who measures one thousand years as a day. It has been only two days! He rose on the third day and perhaps will return the third "day" as well! Our gospel text urges us to not give up on His coming but instead to watch for the signs and wait with eager expectation for the bridegroom to return for His bride, the church. Let's look at it together.

I. WATCH FOR THE SIGNS

Luke 21:25-36 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

STARS: I don't know what the signs in the stars will be. This was spoken to an outdoor, agrarian culture that knew the stars well and depended on them for a calendar and for planting crops. Remember the magi who knew the king was born from a star? One theory is that it could be shifting in the alignment of the heavens from

the age of Pisces to the age of Aquarius due to the earth's precession. This shift last occurred in 68 BC when the pole star went from Arius to Pisces. The apex of the new alignment will be in 2597 but in 2012 this several-hundred-year process put us past the star Regulus and into the zone of Aquarius. Is this biblical? **Genesis 1:14** *And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years..."* The sun and moon may also have eclipses, darkness from volcanoes, solar storms affecting communications and producing stunning "northern lights" displays. There may be great meteor showers and even meteor collisions on earth causing catastrophic damage. The roaring of the sea through intense hurricanes, as we see most every year now, has people terrified and regularly costs us billions of dollars to rebuild. And note that **"men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world..."** What we saw happen in Afghanistan with the terrorists now in possession of our stockpiles of the latest weaponry and China now overseeing the nuclear facilities is terrifying. Also, China's aspirations for Taiwan and Russia's aspirations to once again control the great gates of Kiev as they amass military might on the Ukrainian border is terrifying. Europe is a slave of Russian natural gas. The "GREAT BEAR" and the "GREAT DRAGON" are rising to power and the United States, THE GREAT EAGLE, is weak, deeply in debt, morally bankrupt, politically polarized and without a will to stand for anything other than the greed of our leaders. It is a terrifying time to be sure and if you don't know the Word of God and how it comes out, it would be frightening.

PREPPERS: I have noticed all the "preppers" who have YouTube channels where they show how they are preparing for what they feel is the coming APACOLYPSE. They live off the electric grid and try to raise their own food and preserve it (much like our ancestors did). These people have given up their suburban homes and jobs to prepare for coming, looming disasters (thus called preppers). Some have stockpiles of guns and ammunition. Others are learning how to use hand tools and primitive ways of farming because they feel collapse is coming. They are terrified by what they see ahead and many of them don't have any hope of Jesus coming back to set things right. Some are believers in the Lord.

VISIBLE: Jesus goes on to say that they will **"see the Son of Man coming in the cloud with power and great glory."** I sometimes wonder if the Lord and the armies of heaven and the giant troop of saints in glory will not come at a slow and measured pace. He will move through the galaxies and the astronomers will spot him coming light years away...moving toward earth. Matthew's gospel gives some further light on this verse in **Matthew 24:30** *"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."* **Luke 23:30** *Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"*" This is also mentioned in Revelation 6:16 puts it this way: **"They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"**

REACTIONS: When I think of the return of Christ, I am not afraid. It makes my heart sing for joy. But those who love evil are terrified at the thought that it might be true. I was once terrified at the thought of Christ's return. Now I get up and look out and say to myself, "Perhaps it will be today. Come Lord Jesus, come soon."
NUMBER ONE: WATCH FOR THE SIGNS.

II. GET EXCITED

Luke 21:28 *When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."* **29** *He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

TWO: For the unbeliever, the signs of the return of Christ are terrifying. But for the one who loves the Savior, they are our joy. The advent hymn puts it so well "our hope and expectation, O Jesus now appear. Arise thou

Son so longed for, O'er this benighted sphere." Jesus says this: **STAND UP, LOOK UP AND BE READY FOR RESCUE.** He said that when you see a tree budding you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, you know his return is near. I personally think these vaccine mandates are the "DRESS REHEARSAL" for the mark of the beast. They are threatening we can't work, or buy or sell without the vaccine. Once the computer technology is here to do that, the mark of the beast will be ready to go forward. To me this is a big sign. *Revelation 13:16-18 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 17 so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*

MARK: Up until now we could not imagine that this would be possible. Now we see it happening in whole countries implementing the first steps to this policy and they have the support of the majority of the people who are frightened about the virus. It is the dress rehearsal for the 666 "mark of the beast." That is exciting, because it shows me how close we are getting to the return of Christ. **STAND UP, LOOK UP, GET READY and GET EXCITED.** Jesus is coming again!

III. BE PREPARED

Luke 21:34-36 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

REASONS: Jesus said that we need to be ready for two reasons. 1) to escape all that is about to happen; 2) to be able to stand before the Son of Man. I remember when I wasn't ready and I knew it. I didn't know how to get ready. How do we get ready?

NUMBER ONE: BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Confess Him to others. *Romans 10:9-13 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

NUMBER TWO: GUARD YOUR HEARTS. Don't get weighed down with dissipation. Don't spread yourself too thin or dissipate your energies in worthless pursuits. Avoid drunkenness. So many are trying to hide in a bottle of alcohol or prescription drugs or other chemicals. Others are simply eating themselves to death. And finally, Jesus tells us to not get weighed down with the *anxieties of life*. Be careful not to let your work or the news or your relationships with people or things weigh you down. Keep a balanced life. Guard your time in the word and prayer. Remember all of your stuff is going to be burned up when Jesus comes back. *2 Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

CONCLUSION: Jesus came for Arv, Michael, Ray and Mary Lou this week. Jesus may come back individually for any of us today. And one day soon, Jesus is coming back to corporately snatch us out of here. *1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the*

air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words. Who knows but that Arv, Ray and Mary Lou are saddling up there horses right now to get ready to come back with Christ to get us? If it was this week, we might not even get a chance to bury them! Wouldn't that be amazing? All these years we have recited the creed that he is "coming back to judge the living and the dead." One day, perhaps soon, that will happen. Are you ready?

When I was a teen-ager, our pastor preached sermons like this and many of the church people were terrified because they didn't have the assurance of salvation. I was one of them! But after Jesus came into my heart, the thought of His return no longer brings terror but it is my hope and expectation. I look out the window and say, "Lord, maybe it will be today!" Do you?

"Now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen"

Hymn #159 "Christ Returneth"

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Doxology (AH #390) *Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men. A---men.*

Postlude: Rebekah Olson

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