

The Final Coming Of The Son Of God.

Text: Luke 21:25-36

Suggested Hymns:

17, 489, 11, 486, 15

- 1) The Terrifying Signs At His Coming
- 2) The Manner And Purpose Of His Coming
- 3) The Certainty Of His Coming
- 4) The Preparation Demanded Of Us
In View Of His Coming

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 21:25–36, ²⁵ *“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

²⁷ *Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” ²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.*

³² *Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ³⁴ “But 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. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.*

³⁶ *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.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Not all the Gospel texts chosen during the season of Advent deal with the coming of the Saviour into the flesh, but all of them can help us to prepare our hearts for a proper, God-pleasing, and salutary observance of Christmas.

On the Sunday before Christmas we hear the testimony of John the Baptist that the promised Messiah has come. He also refused honour not due to him and directed his hearers to Christ.

In humility, like John, we must approach Christmas, confessing our unworthiness and helplessness; and our eyes must be lifted up to Jesus who according to the Scriptures came to save us, to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

We must heed John's God-given call to repentance: "***Make straight the way of the Lord!***"¹ We must prepare the way by repentance, so that the Lord can enter our hearts by the Christmas message.

Next Sunday's Gospel contains the answer of Jesus to the question "***Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?***"² His answer proves conclusively that He is the Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, the Saviour of the world, and so it makes us sure that the Child in Bethlehem is rightfully the object of our faith, our homage, and our love.

But how about today's Gospel? It treats of the end of the world, of Christ's coming in a cloud of heaven to judge the living and the dead. What connection has Christ's coming to judge with His birth at Bethlehem?

A number of sermons could be preached on that question, but I will answer that question by another question: *Would you like to face the heavenly Judge on the Last Day without a Bethlehem and without a subsequent Calvary and the Garden of Joseph of Arimathea?*

How would you fare on Judgement Day if there was no Bethlehem and therefore also no Calvary and no open grave?

Sinners standing alone before the Judgement seat are lost, but sinners with their Saviour will enter life eternal. The thought of the Judgement to come should make Bethlehem all the more precious to us. Having stood at Bethlehem with believing hearts, we can joyfully approach eternity with its judgement.

Let us therefore, yes, in preparation for Christmas, today dwell on *The Final Coming of the Son of God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Terrifying Signs At His Coming

Terrifying signs will mark the advent of the Son of God at the end of the world. Christ speaks of them in the beginning of our text. He calls them “*signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars.*” Things will come to pass which will cause “*on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity.*” Man’s terror will be increased by “*the sea and the waves roaring.*”

The events will be so shocking that “*men’s hearts [will be] failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.*” And this description of disturbance and upheaval is concluded with these words: “*The powers of heaven will be shaken.*” Not a psychopath, a person afflicted with gruesome hallucinations, but Christ Himself has described the signs at His coming.

Many people are perplexed by the question, “*Have these signs, mentioned here, been fulfilled?*” Many signs which are to remind us of Christ’s coming have been fulfilled. In Chapter 24 of Matthew, Christ speaks also of other signs than those mentioned in our text. He speaks of false prophets, who come in His name and deceive many. That sign is in evidence now.

In the visible Church many no longer teach the message of God’s Word, but their own thoughts. They ignore the fundamental truths of sin and grace, of Christ’s deity, of His atoning sacrifice, of salvation by faith in the Redeemer, and instead they preach a system of psychology, and of right thinking. What God has done to save man is denied and even ridiculed. That, says Christ, is a sign of the last days before His coming.

Wars and rumours of wars, political upheavals, lawlessness in the home, state, and society, nations rising against nations, are also mentioned as characteristic of the pre-judgement period. Can anyone of average intelligence deny that these signs are fulfilled?

Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are mentioned by Christ. The fact that so-called natural causes produce these calamities does not take from them the character of signs. The rainbow, too, is caused by the sun shining through

moisture; yet it is God's reminder of His covenant with man, that till the end of time no world wide flood will again destroy the inhabitants of the whole world.

Even to the periodic eclipses of the sun and moon have been given by God the significance of reminders that there will be a last day, on which the Son of Man will come in the clouds of heaven.

But the terrifying signs of which Christ speaks in our text will be the immediate precursors, or forerunners, of Christ's coming.

Also in Matthew we hear of some of these signs. The Lord says in Matthew 24:29, ²⁹ *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Yes, the day of Christ's coming will be a day of terror to all who are not united with the Son of Man suddenly appearing in the skies.

2. The Manner And Purpose Of His Coming

Christ furthermore reveals the manner and purpose of His coming. ²⁷ *Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* His advent will be different from His first advent. Then He came in weakness and lowliness. True, even then He was in possession of His divine majesty. At His birth He was more powerful than Caesar Augustus, for He was true God with the Father from eternity. But He came in weakness and lowliness.

He, the Creator, was born of a virgin, born in a stable, in great poverty. He grew up in the despised city of Nazareth and was called the son of a carpenter. Later He had nowhere to lay His head.

But at times He lifted His cloak and permitted a ray of His divine glory to shine forth, for example, at the gate of Nain, at Lazarus' tomb, in the wilderness, blessing the scant supply of bread, on the mountain when the light of His glory surrounded Peter, James, and John, at the entrance of Gethsemane, where His omnipotence cast His captors into the dust before Him.

But generally speaking, from Bethlehem to Calvary He walked in weakness and lowliness.

However, at His coming on the last day His glory will be apparent to all people. The Sanhedrists, who blind-folded themselves in the days of His flesh,

scoffed at the “common” people following Jesus and called His claim to being the Son of God blasphemy, will at the first glance recognise Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

All those who mock or blaspheme Christ, who are really the unbelievers, will see their false ideas about Jesus evaporate like mist before the sun. All people will recognise Him as the Creator and Judge eternal. He will come with power and great glory.

And the purpose of His coming? He indicates the purpose when He speaks of men being accounted worthy *“to stand before the Son of Man.”* He will come to judge the world.

When He had been born, the angel said that He was the Saviour of all people. Yes, Jesus came to save. He said in Matthew 18:11, *“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”* And He said, too, how He would save. He would be lifted up, on the cross, that *“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*³ He would give His life a ransom for men. He came to earn for man forgiveness and salvation by His innocent suffering and death.

He comes now in the Word and saves sinners by offering them salvation, urging them to believe in Him. But then He will come to judge. When He appears in the clouds of heaven, the time of grace in which sinners can lay hold of salvation will be forever past.

The judgement means that, both body and soul, will spend eternity either in hell or in heaven. This is what awaits man when Christ appears in the skies. Therefore He pleads with His own to get ready so that they will receive a verdict of eternal bliss.

Let us dwell just a little longer on the Judgement itself. Christ stresses two things in our text in connection with the Judgement, namely, the plight and fright of those who are not prepared to stand before Him, and the joy of those who are prepared.

In Matt. 25 He goes into detail more than here and tells us that all nations will be gathered before Him. To some He will say, *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*⁴ To the

others He will say: *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*⁵ The latter, the believers in Jesus, need not fear His coming. He tells them in our text that *your redemption draws near.*” And *that the kingdom of God is near,* that is, the Kingdom of Glory which He opened for them and in which they were made citizens by faith in Him.

True, they, too, are sinners and have deserved to be cast away forever, but they stand before Him *“clothed in His righteousness alone,”*⁶ and therefore heaven will receive them. That is what Christ says to us of His coming. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

3. The Certainty Of His Coming

Many people deny it. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not believe it. Their successors today scoff at it. To them Christ speaks in our text and tells them that it is absolutely sure: He will come. He says: *“³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*

Christ’s words, are not only the statements which He made in the days of His flesh, but all the Scriptures are His words. He spoke by the prophets; the evangelists and prophets wrote His Word. What the Scriptures say is true, and they often speak of His coming to judge the living and the dead.

Why do people refuse to believe the words of Christ? They are afraid to believe all that He says. They are afraid of the Judgement, and therefore they deny it. They often quote certain words of Jesus. Whatever appeals to them, what they like to hear and to believe, that part of His words they accept.

What He said on certain occasions against hypocritical church-goers, that they believe and quote, applying it to all who go to church; but what the same Jesus said of the Judgement they refuse to believe.

They often ask the question: *“How can we know that He will really come?”* They could know. If they would only honestly examine Christ’s words, they would know that His words are eternally true.

His Word threatened to destroy mankind by a flood. All but Noah and his family said: *“It cannot, it will not, happen.”* In spite of their denials, it did happen.

He threatened to banish His people to Babylonia. It did come about. Consider the prophecies of His coming, the destruction of Jerusalem. In our text Christ utters a prophecy which shows the certainty of His word. ***My words will by no means pass away.***

He refers to the people of the Jews and says that they shall not disappear until He comes. Around 2,000 years have elapsed since then. How did this people fare? They are scattered over the whole civilised world, but have not disappeared.

Other people, mightier and more numerous than the Jews, have become amalgamated and have disappeared entirely as races, but the Jews remain and bear witness to the truth of Christ's word.

We know, we are divinely convinced, that Christ's Word is true and will never pass away. We confess of Christ in the Apostles' creed that He ***"sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead."*** Let us humbly thank our Saviour that we believe His Word.

But are we really heeding what He says to us about getting ready to meet Him when He comes?

4. The Preparation Demanded Of Us In View Of His Coming

Christ spoke the words of our text to His disciples, to believers. They had confessed: ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."***⁷ They based their hope of redemption on Him.

They were prepared to meet Him at His coming. We read in John 3:18, ¹⁸ ***"He who believes in Him is not condemned."*** And yet, Christ addressed these words of warning to them. He told them to watch and to pray. Let us listen to His Words: ³⁴ ***"But take heed to yourselves ... to stand before the Son of Man."***

Watch! Be careful! Avoid everything which might result in the stifling of your faith. He mentions a few things. ***"Carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life."*** When Christians permit their hearts to be filled with the love of good eating and drinking, with the joys of this life, faith is in great danger of being crowded out of the heart. The more they dwell on the pleasures and treasures of this life, the less they will think of eternal blessings in Christ their Saviour.

Others endanger their faith by sinful worries. Instead of dwelling on the goodness of God, who saved them and has promised to provide also for their earthly welfare, they brood over the question: *‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’*⁸ Finally they lose faith in the Saviour. Christians, watch lest your hearts be overburdened with earthly things and Christ departs out of your hearts.

The danger of falling away from the Saviour is especially great, since many and mighty enemies are active to rob us of faith. Have we forgotten what the Saviour tells us about the devil who walks about seeking to devour us?

Have we forgotten that the world — and we have a good piece of it right in ourselves — seeks to draw us away from our Saviour? Let us be on our guard, lest the devil, the world, and our flesh deceive us and seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great sins and vices.

And pray. Do we lead a life of prayer? And when we pray, what do we ask of God? Bread, health, and other earthly things? We should ask for them. But do you know that only one petition of the seven in the Lord’s Prayer deals with purely earthly things and that six contain requests for spiritual things, for faith, and that the seventh asks for final deliverance through a death in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, Christ wants us to pray chiefly for our eternal salvation. Can we ignore this loving admonition of Him who died for us?

And if we really want to heed Christ’s exhortation, we will also diligently use the Word and the Sacrament by which the Saviour strengthens us. Also at this time and during the approaching Christmas holidays we will come to the house of God to look upon Jesus Christ who came to redeem us, who came to save us, and who will come to take us into eternal bliss. Amen

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

¹ John 1:23

² Matthew 11:3

³ John 3:16

⁴ Matthew 25:41

⁵ Matthew 25:34

⁶ Hymn 331

⁷ Matthew 16:16

⁸ Matthew 6:31