



## THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 16, 2012

### *‘Two Aspects of the Kingdom of God’*

#### **Sermon Text: Luke 17:20-30**

*“And when he (Jesus) was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”*

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

As the believers of the Old Testament times cried out "Watchman, what of the night?", so also in our own time, we cry out *‘Oh Lord, How long before your return?’* for all around us we see a world enveloped in spiritual darkness, a world of horrible wickedness.

The government-sanctioned murder of unborn babies in our country far exceeds the number of Stalin and Hitler’s victims combined as ‘pro-choice’ mothers find abortion on demand more convenient and less financially and socially burdensome than raising a child.

These days we find that not just the filthy abomination of homosexual sex, but also homosexual ‘marriage’ is now being actively advocated and given legal protection by our own secular government.

The number of people in U.S. prisons for drug related offenses grows each year as our politicians themselves run guns in and drugs out of foreign countries. Bankers defraud the people, the government steals from the people at the threat of imprisonment and progressively the stench of the moral decay in this country grows with each passing week.

In addition, we are buffeted on all sides by terrible evil and strife. Our country's involvement in undeclared and unconstitutional wars and smaller skirmishes overseas exact their horrible cost on the minds, limbs and lives of our young men and women. And yet as the tyranny now seated in our nation's capital sends unmanned arial drones anywhere in the world to murder anyone they choose to label a terrorist and in the process maim and murder innocent men, women and children in undeclared wars under the pretense of a 'war on terror', the people of this nation go about their hedonistic every day lives, concerned only with the 'bread and circuses' aspect each new day offers for their lives.

In addition, the Christian's heart and mind, born again of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is constantly assaulted by the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, so that we must daily replenish our strength in the Word, put on the whole armor of faith and with the Two-edged Sword of the Word of God, join the battle, fight the good fight of faith, and so strive to walk as Children of Light.

Many who once walked with us united in that Light of Holy Scripture have decided to compromise biblical truth with vain philosophies of the world and so have turned from the full truth of God's Word. It would seem that such tuning away is evidently precipitated either by a love of money or because of a sinful desire to maintain a false sense of temporal peace with employers, school professors, or other erring family members. Sadly in doing so, these have compromised with the enemy of their souls, selling as it were, their heavenly birth-right for a bowl of this world's pottage. For until their penitent return to the full Truth of God's Word, they remain in the sin of idolatry, and will reap the just wages of sin – eternal death and puishment.

How well it is then we might understand and empathize with the words of Jacob, as he waited for death: "*Lord, I have waited for Thy salvation.*"

So that we ourselves might not be enticed and drawn away from Him as we await our Lord's Second Coming, the Lord Jesus gives us the assurance and comfort we need in His Word.

Here in our text Jesus presents to us:

***Two Aspects of the Kingdom of God:***  
**Firstly: Its nature here on earth and**  
**Secondly: Its final fulfillment at Christ's coming in glory.**

{**PRAYER:**} Heavenly Father sanctify us through Thy truth, Thy Word is Truth. Amen.

The Pharisees of our text who asked Jesus when the kingdom of would come, were much like the Jews and the millenialists of our day, who look for the physical establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth.

They expect and whole-heartedly desire a kingdom brought into being by political force, through social revolution and the overthrow of this world's present governments. Their vision of God's Kingdom is that of a utopian society, where crime, famine, disease, poverty, social injustice, and want are eliminated. They expect a world wide physical kingdom over which the Messiah will govern all from the earthly city of Jerusalem in peace and harmony.

Many, in fact, will tell you that the political unrest which currently exists in the middle-east, when viewed along side Bible prophecy – *albeit taken out of context* – is 'sure proof' of the coming of such a worldly kingdom.

But, just as countless others before them, these vainly attempt to interpret the prophecies of an infinite God with their finite minds.

Rejecting the clear words of Scripture in Second Peter 1:20, "***Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.***" they will not in their own minds, permit God to interpret His own Word, but would usurp that power for themselves and so foist their own interpretation upon it, especially those passages of Scripture which prophesy of the Lord's coming and the creation of His Kingdom.

But the Kingdom of God is no political kingdom. It is not a kingdom wherein the Zionist hope of a restoration of the earthly power and grandeur of King David and King Solomon find place. Nor is it a kingdom such as the millennialists expect, who, not content with Jesus' own words, "***Behold the kingdom of God is within you***" (Luke 17:21) would that God's Kingdom come with great outward exhibition, so that they can say, 'Look, Look, There it is!'

No, Dear Friends, the Jew and the millennialists are both literally "dead" wrong. For the kingdom of God is *not* a visible principality to be built and defended by earthly means. Nor is it accompanied by earthly riches, pomp, honor, or by mere virtue, or respectability of persons. Neither is it yet to come in some distant future.

Jesus said it is here ***now***.

Yes, dear Christians, it is here among us now, TODAY!

It is in the hearts of those who, sorrowing over their sins, have *by faith alone* taken hold of the Grace and Mercy of God offered to the whole world in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is in the hearts of those, who *by faith alone* personally apprehend and accept the suffering and death of the god-man Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary as full atonement for all their sins and as full reconciliation to God. For it is on that wretched cross that Christ Jesus established His kingdom and it is through the Gospel Message alone that His kingdom comes.

In his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther says, "*The kingdom of God is nothing else than that God sent forth His Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of Righteousness, Life, and Salvation against sin, death and an evil conscience, for which end He also bestowed His Holy Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His Holy Word, and to illuminate and strengthen us in the faith by His power.*"

Dear Friends, God's Kingdom is a *spiritual* kingdom which – through His Word alone – has as its throne the heart of each and every believer in Christ. And in a lowly stable in a seemingly insignificant little town named Bethlehem, the human heart's true king was born.

At the temptation of Jesus and on Calvary's mournful mountain, the Devil and the world hoped to overthrow it. But there on the cross the Kingdom of God defeated *all* its enemies.

And though it is held in contempt – despised and rejected by the world – yet it continues to conquer the world, growing from age to age while all other kingdoms and worldly empires rise and fall in time.

Though it seems so insignificant to the world, though it be surrounded by sin and perverse wickedness and though it is constantly beset by false teachers and deserters of the faith, the time is

indeed coming when the Kingdom of God shall be revealed in the fullness of all its heavenly power and majestic glory.

To that day every Christian looks forward to with deep longing. Indeed, the Scriptures tell us that *all* of God's creation groans. (Romans 8:22)

And towards that Day of the Lord each of us should prepare.

Each of us should conscientiously redeem the time we have been given and do all we can with our time, talents and temporal gifts to bring the Gospel message to others. For that day of our Lord's coming in glory to judge the world will come most unexpected. And yet when He comes *all* will know who He is.

Every person, *believer and unbeliever* shall know that He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Those who have despised Him and turned from the full Truth of His Word – be it for love of money, or in order that they might 'freely' live a life of sexual sin, or to maintain an imagined 'peace' with others who have erred from the faith, or for any other reason – if they have remained impenitent to the end, these shall fall upon their faces in abject mortal fear, for they shall realize the eternal damnation that awaits their wayward souls.

Those who have rejected Him – yes, even they who today deny God's very existence – shall be made to bow down before Him. They will do so in utter horror with the terrible knowledge of their just reward in the eternal fires of hell engraved upon their heart, mind and soul.

And those who *by Grace Alone through Faith Alone* have shed all thoughts of work righteousness, self-merit or worthiness and have trusted in Christ alone for mercy and forgiveness, those who *by Grace Alone* through His Word, have remained faithful to that awe-filled day of the Lord, they the Lord shall gather to Himself to be with Him in paradise forevermore.

Dear Christians, Let us so be prepared at all times and in all places to meet Him. Let us daily read, meditate and live Our lives in His Word. For, so kept by God's Holy Spirit in the one true faith through the Word and Sacrament, we shall be empowered to patiently wait and faithfully abide with Him until His glorious return.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (First Peter 1:3-9)*

And now, May the Peace of God which surpasses all human understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and King.  
Amen.