

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. What is Advent? The season is most often thought of as a time of preparation for Christmas, But today we return to the theme of the second coming of Christ. Christmas is the first coming of Christ to this world. In what way did Christ come the first time? As a humble child in a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. As the son of the virgin Mary, He grew up in a little town called Nazareth, known as the son of Joseph the carpenter. For a while, the crowds followed Him, but in the end, he was crucified and died on the cross.

However, this was not the whole story. The third day He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and from there shall come to judge the living and the dead, as we confess in the Creed. As our text says, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into the clouds which hid his physical form, but one day He will return in the clouds in a way that everyone will see. The second coming will not be like the first coming. The first time, Christ came in humility, as a servant of men to die on the cross. Now Christ has all authority in heaven and earth, and when he returns in a visible way, no one will be able to avoid this spectacle. And He will judge all nations as King of kings and Lord of lords, with all of God's power and glory.

So, our purpose in this life is to prepare for the second coming of Christ. Our whole life is a preparation for the second coming of Christ. No one knows the day or hour of the second coming of Christ. When Christ returns in a visible way, it will be the end of this world. The Bible tells us the whole story of this world is advancing to a point, the culmination of all God's plans.

Some religions and philosophies say the history of the world is an eternal cycle of birth and death, that never ends. But the Bible says the world will end with Christ enthroned in glory. The first coming of Christ is the beginning of this process. First, Christ was born in Bethlehem, later He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, He preached forgiveness of sins, died on the cross, rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven. The only prophecy still to be fulfilled is that of His second coming.

It all started with the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. So, in this season of Advent, we prepare for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus. But this is a preview of the second coming of Christ in glory. In the Bible, all prophecies foreshadow the Last Day. The prophets of the Old Testament always prophesied God's judgment against the people Israel. The chosen nation deviated from the will of God, so God allowed its defeat at the hands of the Assyrians and others. This was the judgment of God against Israel. Every trial, every prophecy of judgment pointed toward the Final Judgment, when Christ will judge all nations and all the proud and evildoers will find their eternal punishment. The fate of all those who think they do not need a Savior is the eternal fire.

Therefore, those who do not believe in Jesus Christ have this thought deep in their hearts, that judgment is near. They do not want to think about this, but always have the fear of doomsday or the end of their own lives. We'll all meet the glorified Christ in one of two ways: In the hour of our death or on the Last Day, if we are alive on that day. And all will meet Christ in His glory as Savior or Judge.

Unbelievers are afraid of their own deaths, as well as the end of the world. They cannot avoid this thought, so they are obsessed with the theme of doomsday. In the beginning of the 21st century, many

people believed that the world would end in 2012 because the Mayan calendar ended in that year. What happened? The end of the world did not come in 2012. What about SARS? What about wars and terrorists? What about COVID? People are always trying to figure out when the world will end. They always want to know when it's time for the world's end to avoid, if possible, the terror and pain of that time. Because they do not believe in Jesus Christ, this theme is a source of terror.

For us who believe, it is totally different. We are not afraid of doomsday, or our death, because for us the second coming of Christ is like a grander Christmas than we celebrate now. For many people, Christmas is simply a celebration of goodwill and brotherhood, and to drink and eat with family and friends. It is of course a season of joy for Christians because of the birth of Christ, but the second coming will be much more than the former. It will be a celebration for all time.

What does our text for today say? "There will be signs in the sun, and moon, and stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring." When the Bible speaks of signs, it is not so that we can figure out the date of the end of the world, but to assure us that everything is under God's control. Then we can live our lives without fear or anxiety about the end of the world or the end of our life in this world. We are not afraid of earthquakes, tsunamis, diseases, wars, or meteors. All are under God's control. Our mission is to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, so God will delay the Final Day for us to perform this work for Him.

We have no fear of death. We seek death as the door to eternal life with Christ. For us, there is always hope in this world and beyond. And so, we have the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.