

Written Copy For: As in the Days of Noah-Matthew 24:36-44

1st Sunday in Advent

December 1st, 2019

Text: Matthew 24:36-39

³⁶ "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Exegetical Statement

Jesus is continuing the Olivet Discourse, responding to the disciples' two-fold question concerning what would be the signs leading up to the destruction of the Temple as well as the signs leading up to His return. He has given a variety of signs and warnings about not being led astray by false prophets and those claiming He has secretly returned unbeknownst to them. Now returns to emphasize an earlier statement that no one will know the day or the hour. He adds that not even He, the divine Son of God in the flesh knows. Only the Father knows exactly what day and hour will be the last. He uses the days leading up to Noah's flood as an illustration. Just as none of the unbelieving world expected on the day Noah entered the Ark that they would be destroyed, so will be the coming of the Last Day. As all unbelievers were swept away by the sudden deluge of water there will be those going about their daily business of life when all of a sudden, they are taken away for judgment and their fate in Eternal Hell. But those who believe will be left to enjoy Eternal Life on the re-created perfect heaven and earth. Jesus then illustrates the plight of the Church with His illustration concerning the house owner who knows a thief is coming but not what hour of the night. Therefore the only way to protect his possessions is to be on guard throughout the night. In the same manner, since the Church does not know the day of the hour, we need to protect ourselves from falling away from our faith. We are to remain awake as we work with the Holy Spirit in our Sanctification through His working in the Word and Sacraments.

Focus Statement:

Just as God supplied the means of salvation for Noah through the Ark that he built according to God's design; Christ came to build for us an Ark to save us from the destruction on the Last Day. We are safe in the Ark that is His Church where He has placed us and protects us through Word and Sacrament: providing ample supply of His gifts earned for us on the cross: forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. Here His Spirit protects us from being led astray so we remain safe and ready for Christ's return on any day.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We live each day in anticipation that tomorrow will come. Scripture says that just as in the days of Noah all people will be living their lives as if nothing is going to happen leading up to the Last Day. If we allow ourselves to be lulled away from our faith in Christ, then our Last Day may catch us asleep in faith and being swept away into the outer darkness of Eternal Hell

What the hearer should do as a result:

Do our part in the work of the Holy Spirit to keep us in faith by making regular use of the Word and Sacraments, remembering that our goal and future is not in this world but Eternal Life to come.

Subject Sentence: Always Be Ready Thru Spirit's Work of Sanctification

When I was in Elementary School my Mom and Dad had to leave for work before the bus came to pick me up. So they arranged for me to stay at Grandma Pretznov's house and take the bus which stopped right across the street from her. It worked out pretty well. She often made me breakfast and usually had donuts or cinnamon rolls, something my Mom didn't normally offer. I would sit in the family room and watch out the big picture window for the bus to pull up. I would have just enough time to run out and get on before all the rest of the kids had finished loading. I had about an hour and a half to wait from the time my Mom dropped me off before the bus arrived. To pass the time I started looking at the picture albums my Grandma had on the coffee table. When she saw I was interested in them she began to sit down and tell me about each picture: who it was and where it was taken at. I was only mildly interested in them until we progressed through history to the time I was born. Then they became very interesting. So much so that one day we were so engrossed in the photo album that the bus came and left without me getting on. We didn't realize it had come until my Mom called Grandma and wanted to know where I was. She had to leave work and drive me to school since Grandma didn't drive anymore. That was not a very pleasant car ride with Mom to say the least.

I'd like to tell you that was the last time I missed my bus at Grandma's, but it wasn't. During the winter I would come to Grandmas wearing my heavy winter coat, hat, mittens, snow boots, and snow pants. It always got hot sitting in her house waiting for the bus with all that stuff on. So I began to take it off, watching the clock for it to get close to the time the bus was supposed to arrive so I could get it all back on in time. But there was the day the bus came earlier than I expected, and I wasn't ready, and it left without me. Mom had to

come again. After that she made different arrangements for me on the mornings before school.

You may have had similar circumstances growing up. You probably have had something similar happen as an adult. Especially when it comes to the Christmas Season. If you're like me, you look at the calendar and see its only December 1st. Plenty of time to shop. And then its like those movies where the pages on the calendar flutter off one after the other and now all of a sudden, it's the weekend before Christmas. You've got to endure the crush of last-minute Christmas Shopping. You may have had your list ready earlier and the stores you needed to go to all planned out ahead of time. But you let your guard down. And now you've got to scramble. You've taken your proverbial boots and snow pants off and now the bus is here and your afraid your going to miss it. Can something similar also happen in our spiritual life too?

In our Gospel Lesson Jesus tells us in **Matthew 26:36** "**But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.**" That day He is referring to is the Last Day: the final day in the history of this world after which there are no more days. At which time Jesus will return and all those who believe in Him will enter with Him into eternal life. But those who do not believe in Him will be judged guilty of all the sins they have committed in life, and made to suffer for them for an eternity in the Eternal Lake of Fire-which we normally call hell. Jesus gives this warning to two different sets of people. The believers and the unbelievers.

For those who don't believe in Him it's a wake-up call. In a world that often appears to be headed down into the depths of hell with all the war, injustice, crime, pollution, hate, murder, you'd think it would be an easy to grasp truth. But its not. Those who do worry about the future of our planet spend their time contemplating what mankind can do to either keep the status quo forever (at least until the sun burns out in 4 to 5 billion years) or through reform and drastic environmental protection turn this planet into their own ideal heaven on earth. They don't believe there is a God so why worry about His return. Or they see Him as some kind of mindless force, or perhaps a being who started everything off but since then has taken off-never to return. For these who continue to believe this way, Jesus warning will stand as judgment on the Last Day.

But for us, the Church, His warning is much different. It comes at the end of a lengthy discourse on what must happen between the time Jesus returns to the Father after His resurrection, and His return back to us at the end of time. Our Gospel Lesson comes toward the end of this discourse where Jesus has provided quite a bit of information on what we should expect. Much of what He has warned about has already been happening and continues to occur: wars and military uprisings and riots, natural disasters, man's lack of love and compassion for one another showing itself in increased murder and other crimes, and the persecution of the Church which will become more intense through the activity of the Antichrist; the one who will claim to be the voice and presence of God on earth and through the power of the devil will delude many people. Then at the end there will be signs never seen before in the sun and moon and the stars. The very cohesiveness of the universe

will be shaken. And yet Jesus tells us no one will know the Last Day is upon them; neither the unbelievers nor the Church.

Jesus says in **Matthew 24:37-39** ³⁷ **For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.** ³⁸ **For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,** ³⁹ **and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**” At the time of Noah no one, not even Noah himself knew what day the flood would begin, until that day God told he and his family to get into the ark. And all the while the world was continuing on as normal: people eating and drinking, getting married, going about their daily business as they always had, believing that they would still be doing so tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Until that day when all of a sudden, the water poured from the sky and burst up from the ground. And before anyone knew what was happening or could do anything about it, they were swept away. Drowned. It was too late to seek shelter in the Ark or make one of their own. **“So it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”** Jesus says. What will you and I be doing when that Last Day comes? We will be living our lives as normal too. Doing all the things that we are right now, even though all these signs that Jesus spoke of are being fulfilled. None of us will stop and look around and say: “You know, I think that today will be that day, or tomorrow, or the next.” Just as they had no warning before the flood so too for us on the Last Day. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 24:44** **“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** He will come at a time when neither the world nor the

Church is expecting Him. So we must also be ready. But how? How are we to be made ready?

How did Noah survive on the day the flood waters came? He was kept safe inside the Ark, the gift from God specially designed to save all 8 members of his family. Why did God do that for Noah? Were he and his family perfect? The only perfect people to exist up to that point were Adam and Eve, that is until they fell into sin. After that no one was perfect. Noah was saved because God chose him, and gave to him the gift of faith. God gave him the power to believe in God's promise that a flood would come, and that the Ark would save them. Noah had never seen a flood before, or an Ark. But he trusted God's promises by faith.

How can we be ready for Jesus' coming again on the Last Day? By the Ark that God has provided for us too through the work of His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. The Father sent His only Son to earth on Christmas morning to begin His grand building project: to build the Ark that is His Church. Jesus built it through His perfect life of obedience and through His suffering and death. He made it the place of our salvation by taking on all the punishment our sins deserved on the cross. And He finished that building program when He rose from the dead. Just as Noah's ark was the means of salvation for him and his family, the Church is the means through which He provides salvation for us. Jesus has empowered His Church to be the vehicle to deliver the Gospel Message and all that the Gospel does in us by faith. Here as we gather together, we receive through that Message: forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. It is here where the Spirit promised to be at work through the waters of Baptism to call us into this Ark and keep us safe within. It is here in the Lord's Supper that Christ comes to be present with us and personally deliver all He won for us on

the cross into our bodies and our souls. It is here that He works to keep us in repentant faith: showing us our sins and then showing us our Savior. It is here He gives us the power to believe in His words of forgiveness. Here, not in this building, but here in this gathering of true believers that we call the invisible Church. We are His Ark, His means to carry His people safely through the turbulence in the world to come, and deliver us to the shores of everlasting life.

Jesus says **Matthew 24:44** **“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** We must be ready. He has made us ready. How do we remain ready in a world that tempts us to take off our boots and snow pants, to take walk away from our lives of faith? In a world that tempts us to look at pictures of ourselves instead of looking at our Lord and Savior? Well; what was Noah doing leading up to the flood? How did God keep he and his family ready and in faith? He was daily working on what God had told him to do: building the ark. Every morning when he and his family got up and went back to work on that Ark, they were reminded of God’s promise to flood the earth, His impending judgment on evil, and His gracious promise of salvation He had made to Noah and family. And to the unbelieving world it was a daily message of judgment for them, but also a declaration of love toward all who believe in God’s word.

What does Christ have for us to do? He gives us the work of His Ark: His Church and it’s ministry. We work at building one another up in the faith as we gather for worship and prayer, as we gather for fellowship. And as we take His testimony of judgment and salvation out beyond these four walls. As we go out and talk with those who are disturbed by what they see in the world and what they are experiencing as man’s love and

compassion for his fellow man fades away, and as the world grows more evil. We tell them about how God judged the earth in the time of Noah, and how He saved Noah and his family in the Ark. Then we can tell them about the Ark that Christ will use to save all those who believe in Him. How He came on Christmas morning to build it, died and rose again to empower it with forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. How He grants to all the gift of faith through the very Gospel you are lovingly proclaiming to them. As we do these things, just as with Noah, the Spirit is at work to strengthen and confirm us in our faith.

(Matthew 24:36) “For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” Just as Noah couldn’t save himself, so we too would be unable to save ourselves without the work of God in Christ Jesus. Even as He has made us ready through His death and resurrection, without the work of the Holy Spirit in the Word and Sacrament we would all have our boots and coats and hats and snow pants stripped off. When the bus to eternal life came you and I would not be on it. But we are kept safe here in the Ark that is the Church. Kept safely in faith even as we do the work He has given us to do as the Church. My you remain ready as His witnesses to His judgment against evil, and His love and mercy offered through the gift of His Son. May you remain safely in the Ark of the Church for the rest of your life until our Lord and Savior’s return on the Last Day. Amen.