

## **Written Copy: Daniel 12:1-2 “A Good Habit to Make and Keep”**

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost-Proper 28

Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### **Text: Daniel 12:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

### **Exegetical Statement**

We are currently in that time of great distress and anguish that Daniel reveals, which Jesus expounds on. And it will continue and grow worse as we approach the Last Day, Judgement Day. On that day the bodies of all people who ever lived will be raised up out of the dust of the earth to stand before God. Some will be sentenced to everlasting disgrace and shame, eternally suffering of body, soul, and spirit so horrible that they become the object of everlasting contempt and horror. But some will be raised to enjoy life everlasting, all those whose names are found written in the Lambs Book of Life. They will shine like the stars in the Real presence of God the Son Himself, along with those whom the Spirit used to bring to everlasting right standing with the Holy God.

### **Focus Statement:**

Jesus knows how increasingly hard our lives will be the closer it gets to His return. He came to provide the once and for all sacrifice for sin that forgives all the times we fail Him and disobey. His shed blood pours down the page where our sins were recorded in red ink, making them unreadable. Because of our faith in Him He chooses to remember them no more. Because of this, when we stand before Him on Judgement Day, we will stand in perfect glorified bodies. We will not hear about our sins, but will hear about the ways that the Spirit used us as tools to bring faith to bear in the lives of others so that Christ remembers their sin no more.

### **Function Statement:**

#### **Why it's important to know:**

The devil is hard at work through this time of increased temptation and affliction to move us away from our saving faith in Christ. He wants us to think that worship, Bible Study, and fellowship don't matter. He wants us to be among those who will stand bodily before the Judgment throne and hear recounted all their sins, and how awful they are, and then suffer body, soul, and spirit forever.

#### **What the hearer should do as a result:**

Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit who works through the means of grace in the Divine Service to keep us steadfast in repentant faith so that we will stand before Him in glory. He wants us to be present to receive His grace poured out, and to be the means through which our brothers and sisters in faith are built up.

### **Subject Sentence: Instead of a recounting of sins you will be welcomed**

## Introduction

After I had my cataract surgery I was told not to go to the gym and work out for one week. Up until that time I had gotten in the habit of going 5 times a week. Now, it was only 7 days that I missed. It might seem like no big deal. But let me tell you, when those 7 days off were up, and I could go back to the gym, it was a struggle to do so. For two days I found excuses not to get up and go. I did finally make it back, but it was hard.

I bring this up in regard to this admonishment from our Epistle Lesson. **Hebrews 10:24-25** <sup>24</sup> **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,** <sup>25</sup> **not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.** Where is it we meet together to stir one another up and encourage one another? Here, as we gather for Divine Service. When you attend worship on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis you are creating a habit, a good habit. But some who are members of Lamb of God have developed a different habit, a habit of not meeting together with us. And the funny thing about people is that good habits take longer to cement themselves in our lives than bad habits. Bad habits get programmed much quicker. Just like my having to stop going to the gym, when we make missing worship a habit, it can be hard to break it and come back again.

Now you might be thinking, “Why does this matter? I know I’m not saved by my Church attendance.” And I would agree with you 100%. But joining us here in this Sanctuary for Divine Worship is important and matters for the very reason our Old Testament Lesson and our Gospel Lesson speak of: times of temptation and persecution will continue and increase, and we need to be made ready and kept ready for what is to come.

## The Times of Trouble and Temptation Ahead

**Daniel 12:1a** **“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.**

Now some think that this verse is speaking into the future, and that we have plenty of time to worry about these times of trouble later. But if you look at how Jesus describes these times of trouble and persecution: wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters, famines. He describes these as only the beginning of the birth pains, the worst is yet to come. These things are going on now, and will continue to go on, getting increasingly more frequent and more painful.

The immediate and partial fulfillment of Daniels and Jesus' prophecy is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. The Jews revolted against the Romans who sent many troops to surround the city and lay siege to it. The city was blockaded, no food or supplies could get in. It lasted for 3 ½ months. While the Roman army battered away at the walls of Jerusalem the people inside began to starve. Jewish historian Josephus said it got to the point where mothers were cooking and eating their own babies. Finally, when the Romans broke through the wall they invaded the city, slaughtering an untold number of men, women, and children. Estimates of the death toll range from 75,000 to as many as 1.1 million as recorded by Josephus. It came as the city was full of Jews who had come to celebrate the Passover. The Romans also completely destroyed the temple, which has never been rebuilt.

This is a word picture for the even greater persecution and destruction leading up to Jesus' return on the Last Day. Notice that Daniel mentions the rising up of the Archangel Micheal, the angelic prince who was the protector of the Lord's people. This mention of angelic protection means the struggle and persecution is not just physical or emotional, but spiritual.

Jesus addresses this in **Mark 13:21-22** <sup>21</sup> **And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it.** <sup>22</sup> **For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.**

Who is behind this attack? Not the Romans, or any terrorist organization, or evil person. This is the work of Satan himself. It's going on now as we speak in our world. It is the pressure from society to change and conform our moral standards into what society says is permissible. He is at work in denominations that preach and teach that lifestyles involving unrepentant sinning are okay, because Jesus is the God of love and acceptance of all people. He is the God of love, and He does love all of us no matter what the sin. But He is the God of justice. Sin is still sin. And when the Church no longer calls what God's Word testifies is sin, what happens to our desperate need for a Savior?

The pressure upon the Church and you as individuals is real and increasing. Jesus calls us to love the sinner but hate the sin. And in this broken sinful world with broken sinful hearts, on our own we struggle to walk this line. The devils call just to give in and conform to the world's standards becomes increasingly more powerful the closer we get to the end, even among our own Church body today.

## What's At Stake on Judgement Day for the Unbeliever?

**Daniel 12:2** **And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** What's at stake for you and for me? Our eternal destination. On Judgment Day all people who have ever lived will be resurrected, both believers and unbelievers. But each group will have totally different experiences and destinations.

Those who died without faith, both those who never believed as well as those who at one time believed but allowed themselves to be led astray by the devil's spiritual warfare, will all be resurrected. Their souls which had been suffering pain and torment spiritually will be reunited with their bodies. These bodies will not be made perfect. They will be bodies which will stand before the Judge of all, our Lord Jesus. He will have present before them all the ways they ever disobeyed God's command to worship Him alone and love their fellow man. They will see their sins from God's eyes, how dirty, and mean, and awful all of them really are. They will be struck full force with the shame and disgrace they have earned for themselves. And then they will be sent away to relive over and over again these acts of shame and disgrace as they suffer physically, emotionally, and spiritually in eternal hell. It will be horrible, and it will never end.

## What Will You Hear Standing Before the Throne?

But what about those who will awake from the sleep of death to everlasting life? Who are they? And will you be one of them? **Daniel 12:1b** **But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.**

What is this book? It is the Lamb's Book of Life. Who are these whose names are found within? All those who died in faith believing that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior. That includes you and me!

Now the thing is, our life was just as filled with sins and disobedience as those who are sent off to eternal hell and suffering. Yet you and I hold by faith that Jesus suffered and died, shedding His blood on the cross to forgive every single one of your sins. He took all of them, all that you have committed in the past, that you will commit today, and will commit the rest of your days on earth; all of them went to the cross and were atoned for by Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. All of them.

Your body also will be raised from the dust of the earth. But unlike the unbelievers yours will be made new and perfect. All the aches, pains, sickness, problems that have plagued you will be gone. You will be healthier than you've ever been in this lifetime.

And what will you hear as you stand before the Judge of all people? Keep in mind who He is to you by faith, He is your Savior who gave His life so that you would stand in His presence now and live in His presence forever. You will not hear recited the many ways you too have disobeyed Him in thought, word, and deed. You will not be shown how awful your sins are in His eyes. You've already seen that as revealed by the Holy Spirit when He drives you to confess them.

How can you be sure? **Hebrews 10:16-17** <sup>16</sup> **“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”** <sup>17</sup> **then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”** You entered into that Covenant in your baptism. You have His law: meaning the expression of His will for you written on your mind and heart by the indwelling Spirit. He uses that and the Gospel Message of Jesus' forgiveness to keep you in repentant faith now and until the day you stand before your Savior.

Why will your sins not be recited before you on Judgment Day? Because your Lord and Savior chooses to remember them no more. This is His gift of grace given to you by faith in your baptism. As an illustration of this, think about all your sins being recorded in a book in red ink. Page after page after page of all your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. But then, because of your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, His blood is poured out on every single page. His red blood flows over that red ink making it unreadable. That is symbolic of what happens to you and for you in Confession and Absolution. His message to you every time you confess your sins is that His promised forgiveness in the Absolution is and continues to be for you.

## **How You Can Make Sure Your Brother/Sister Shines Like Star**

**Daniel 12:3** **And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.**

Who are these wise ones? Those that have the wisdom of repentant faith in Christ. Who are these who turn many to righteousness? That's the work the Holy Spirit desires to do in you and through you in those around you. It's the work He is doing right now in this place. That's why these verses are so important: **Hebrews 10:24-25** <sup>24</sup> **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,** <sup>25</sup> **not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.** By your presence here in this Sanctuary you are stirring up one another up in love and faith by your singing, your giving voice to the liturgy, as well as your choice to sacrifice your time each Sunday morning to come and worship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now those of you who are livestreaming at home: please know that I am very thankful that you can join us. And truly the Spirit is engaging your heart to worship along with us. But it's not the same as being here in person. It's not the same as being here joining us in lifting up our hearts and through us the hearts of your fellow brothers and sisters by your presence. It's not the same as being able to receive the body and blood of your Savior Jesus Christ into your body and soul. It's not the same for you or for us. We miss you. I know there are some who due to distance or physical condition can't be present. But for those of you who could, I'm encouraging you join us whenever you can here in the real presence of our Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

It was hard going back to the gym this week after taking a week off. But what helped was that I had made it a habit of going over the past 11 months. And I realized that the longer I put off going back, the harder it would be. Coming here to worship on Sunday is a good habit to get into. It's the place where the Holy Spirit works to keep your faith alive and strong. The devil is at work through spiritual warfare giving you all kinds of reasons not to get up and come. He is at work to move you away from your faith and trust in Christ so that you might join him in eternal suffering. But Jesus gave His life so that your eternity would be spent with Him. He doesn't want to recite all your sins before you on Judgement Day. Instead, He wants to recite for you all the times and ways you helped others come to faith and remain in faith. He wants you to be here to be a part of His Spirit's work to that end. Let's not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but instead be here to encourage one another to make and keep a new habit of joining together to worship our Lord and Savior today, and all the more because Judgment Day is drawing near. Because of the faith His Spirit is at work keeping alive in you Christ is waiting to welcome you to eternal life with Him. Amen.