

25th Pentecost Sermon
November 14, 2021

Where is your hope? We live in a physical age that seeks its own. We live life and desire to have our moments satisfied. Lest we take care, we can quickly come to the place where we live just for this moment, what will satisfy us here and now. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with this, but it is not the whole of life. Many seem to have come to the place of eating, drinking and making merry, not caring for tomorrow. The other extreme is equally tempting and will equally draw us away from the truth of the Gospel, for we may be tempted to be so rid of this age that we do not live in it.

Our Lord is the Lord of balance, moderation, or temperance as it has been called by the church. We have been created for a little while lower than the angels, but we have the hope, given by our Savior, that we shall be more. We are both physical and spiritual beings. We are attached to this world, but also, through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the new life in Christ, part of the spiritual realm. It is not that one should decrease so that the other may increase, it is both.

We are curious in this age, for we have been limited to live in the moment in which we live. Those moments are given out one at a time. The disciples walked around the beautiful city of Jerusalem. They saw the temple mount, newly refurbished by Herod the Great, and marveled at the work. All the more so, coming from small fishing villages with small homes. Not unlike a farm boy going to the big city for the first time. Marveling over the architecture, their physical selves could not imagine anything more grand. We sometimes do the same and then the sight we have been given by faith becomes clouded.

There is something going on in our so-called modern age. Hitler proclaimed that his nation would enjoy a thousand year reign. If we are just physical beings who live less than one hundred years, then this is very impressive – something that will last ten or fifteen lifetimes – twenty-five generations. But, if we are eternal, then what is a thousand years? A thousand years is as a day from the perspective of eternity. Jesus tells us to take the eternal view.

That day, on the temple mount, Jesus spoke words of prophecy, for in fact, the Romans would, a few decades after the resurrection of Jesus, tear down the temple, leaving rubble where the stones do not touch one another, sitting to this day with a clear picture of Jesus' prophecy. Yes, this is a sign for those who will see it, but it is small compared to the other things He has told us. He told us that nations must rise – and this during a time of the Roman empire (at its zenith) where such a thing was unfathomable. He said that they would war with one another. He spoke of earthquakes in places all over the world. Most of the world was unknown to the disciples. He said that this was just the beginning. What are we to do with these things? So many seem to be caught up in the anxiety of the age – and this is nothing new – that the faithful become stagnant, caught up in the fear of the age, the Zeitgeist of the day. The anxiety that is fueling our culture is nothing new. It is the same devilishness that takes us out of the moment, fearing for what is coming. Jesus gives us the cure.

In the days of the judges, the culture placed great value on women who had children. Hannah had been unable to bear a child. As is true in every culture, where there are those who do not fit into the mainstream of expectations, she was ridiculed. “There must be something wrong with you that God would not bless you.” The anxiety of that age pressed in on her, but she had faith. “Lord, if You give me a child, I will raise Him to be Your servant.” This, in part, gives us an answer on how to live during great anxiety: live in the moment and plan for a future in this world while also preparing to be with the Lord forever. To the question, “What should I

do today?," the answer comes, "Whatever the Lord gives you to do." In simple terms, live each day as the Lord gives it knowing that He is leading you through all of the circumstances of your life. Why do you worry when you have been told that you are in the Lord's hands?

We do worry. That is one of the curses of sin. But, for a moment, let us ponder this in light of the promise of the Gospel. Has not Jesus died so that all of your sins are forgiven? Does this grace you have received not brought you to the place of the hope that because Jesus lives, you shall live? Are we not told that He is with us all the time and that He will never leave, nor forsake us? Do we not believe that He has given us the power to become children of God? Has our Lord not given us the goal that we shall be perfect, even as the Heavenly Father is perfect? Yes, yes to all of these. We are on a journey – the journey of faith – and it will go through what it will go through in this life as we are prepared for the life to come. This is why Jesus told us to be anxious for nothing. You are in the Lord's hands. Things may happen – indeed, they will – but nothing, absolutely nothing, is beyond what the Lord has planned.

For those who pay attention to things that have gone on in history, sometimes it seems so arbitrary. Does Scripture not say that the Lord know the plans He has for us? Many of these things are to teach us to trust the Lord above all things. Yes, horrible things happen in this age, but what are they compared to what the Lord is promising? Some will think I am being trivial over travesty, but Jesus leads us to see things from the perspective of the big picture.

Christ died once for all and sits at the right hand of God. He is preparing a place for all the faithful that where He is, they may also be. And you know the way to where He is. It is with Him and through Him that You will be brought to be in the Father's presence forever. He is bringing all things into subjection. He has made the final sacrifice for all of us who live by faith that we may be sanctified forever.

Therefore, my friends, we ought to enter the holy place the Lord has prepared for us and dwell in His presence here and now as we shall do forever. A new and living way has been opened for us so that we may live by faith, trusting in the complete work of Jesus as He completes us to dwell with Him eternally. Approach with a full assurance of faith knowing that our Savior has done all that is needed in order for us to dwell with Him forever.

Yes, there will still be turmoil in this world. Our Lord has told us so. We are instructed to provoke one another – I love that aggressive word which is so politically incorrect – to do good works. If what I say offends your worldly sensibilities, good. I am to provoke you so that you live by faith, trusting God above what you see and understand. God is good and He is leading the faithful as He prepares us to dwell with Him eternally. Meanwhile, there is work to be done here and now. What work does the Lord have in mind for you today, here and now? We are to be encouraged to live with a true heart in the full assurance of faith. I know there are many in this post-covid age who have neglected to participate in the communion of saints, but don't let the leaven of this world infect you with the truly deadly disease of thinking our daily lives do not matter to the Lord. He invested His life so that we could walk the journey with Him to become what He will make of us.

The day is approaching. One day, it will be our day. But there is today, and this is the day the Lord has made and we are to rejoice in it. Our rejoicing is best when it is practical and lived moment by moment. You see the signs of the times. Now see the One who gave you the ability to see. You are anxious because you see the world swimming in wickedness. See the One who saves all who believe, rescuing us one at a time. Keep your eyes upon Jesus, for He will lead you all the days of your life. Amen.