

Sermon for The Third Sunday in Advent

Date: December 16, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Joel 2:1-7,11-14

Epistle Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25-36

Sermon Text: Luke 21:25-36

Sermon Title: He Will Return



Hymns:

LSB 380 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

LSB 367 – Angels From the Realms of Glory

LSB 400 – Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning

LSB 397 – As With Gladness Men of Old

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Vespers



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Text: Luke 21:25-36

Signs will occur in the sun, moon, and stars. The nations of the earth will be deeply troubled and confused because of the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint as they fearfully wait for what will happen to the world. Indeed, the powers of the universe will be shaken. Then people will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to happen, stand with confidence! The time when you will be set free is near.

Then Jesus used this story as an illustration. “Look at the fig tree or any other tree. As soon as leaves grow on them, you know without being told that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happen, you know that God’s kingdom is near. I can guarantee this truth: This generation will not disappear until all this takes place. The earth and the heavens will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

Make sure that you don’t become drunk, hung over, and worried about life. Then that day could suddenly catch you by surprise like a trap. That day will surprise all people who live on the earth. Be alert at all times. Pray so that you have the strength to escape everything that is about to happen and to stand in front of the Son of Man.”

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Grace to you from the Prince of Peace Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

At the Seminary I was able to fit into my schedule a class where we watched movies and then spent time exploring the Christology in those movies. In other words we explored the movies to see Christ-like images and themes in them. Then we discussed how accurate or correct those images and themes were with the real truths of Scripture. I'll have to admit that the class has destroyed my ability to ever really just enjoy a movie. I am always evaluating it according to the confessions of the Church and its portrayal of Christianity.

Just to give you an example: I would presume that everyone here has watched the Waltons on TV at some point in their lives. You probably thought that was good wholesome programming. The kind of TV it would be nice to get back to. I used to think the same thing. Now when I watch the Waltons I see that John Walton, the Father, never got baptized and bragged about it often. He also got angry every time Olivia, his wife, brought it up. Zebulon "Grandpa" Walton went to church but always stated it was something for Sundays, and not something that should have too much affect during the week. Nearly every pastor on the show was either a pulpit pounding – wrath of God shouter who made a fool out of himself before the end of the show, or someone so feeble and weak he was an embarrassment from the very start.

You see what I mean. I can't watch anything anymore. Now before I move on I would like to express that the Waltons did have a lot of good in it. Family values generally did get expressed in a positive way, and it is certainly better and healthier programming than most any series on television these days. The point is Hollywood always sees the Church as the enemy, or at least in the way.

Well, the Waltons aside, there is a movie that has some Christ-like images that I'd like to explore with you. This movie is *The Terminator*. There is a scene in that movie where a large man dressed in dark leather walks into a police station. The officer at the desk asks, "What do you want?"

The dark man does not respond, he only looks around the room, then directs his attention to the officer and says, "I'll be back." In a thick Hungarian accent.

A few minutes later chaos and destruction are unleashed on that police station as the dark man, "The Terminator," drives through the front of the building with a car. He told them he was coming back. They just didn't know when. When he did, they were not ready, nor were they on his side. It not a good idea to be on the wrong side of *The Terminator*.



When Adam and Eve ate themselves out of the Garden of Eden God made a promise. God said, "I'll be back." (Though it is probably fair to assume he was not using a thick Hungarian accent.) Still He said He would return. That return is what Advent is about. The arrival of Jesus the Christ who would save all people from their sins.

He arrived to bring “glory to God in the Highest and peace to His people on Earth.”¹ However, from Satan’s perspective things were a little different. He saw Jesus’ arrival as something to worry about, to dread, to fear, because everywhere Jesus went, everything Satan had done, to pull people away from God, was being destroyed. For Satan Jesus’ arrival meant chaos and destruction for all his plans.

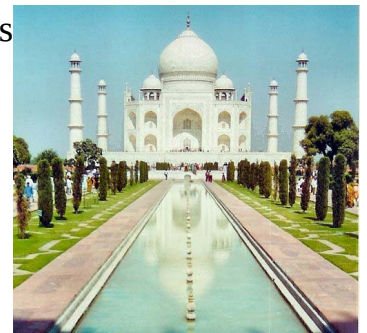
Now for those action adventure aficionados and *Terminator* connoisseurs you know, *The Terminator* had a sequel. It was called: *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Well Jesus is also going to do a sequel and it is also called Judgment Day. In the *Terminator* sequel there is even more chaos, more mayhem, and more destruction than in the first. It was awesome! ...but I digress... In Jesus’ Judgment Day there will also be more chaos, more mayhem, and much more destruction. For Satan and all who follow him the Terminator is coming. He will be back, and when he arrives there will be no escape and no survival. He will find and judge everyone.

For those who are not ready the judgment is “You are Terminated.” (He also will probably not use a thick Hungarian accent.) Trust me you really want to be on Jesus’ good side when He returns. You really don’t want Him to consider you an enemy because when He returns He will be the Terminator for those who are not ready for Him.

Now you may be aware that the world today does not take Jesus seriously. We are here waiting with Mary and Joseph. We are getting ready for the birth of baby Jesus. We imagine the smell of the manger and the crush of the crowds. We imagine the stress and worry these two must have had thinking that the Son of God, through their lack of planning, was going to be born and laid in a feeding trough. We remember the shepherd that came to worship the Christ Child, and the angels that burst out of Heaven to fill the skies proclaiming the Birth of the Holy One of Israel.

The world hasn’t really changed much. They are still ignoring the anticipation that Mary, Joseph, and we, are experiencing. The world is hustling and busting about. They are shopping and making preparations. They are putting schedules together, gathering recipes, and planning meals. They are doing all of this because a Baby was born, though they’ve forgotten the Baby because of the season. Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus are once again lost in the crowd, congestion, and conflagration of running about getting ready.

Shah Jahan was the emperor in the part of the world we now know as India. At the death of his wife he was so stricken with grief that he was barely able to rule. A year later he began construction of one of the most beautiful, and one of the most recognizable, buildings in the world. This building, the Taj Mahal, would be her tomb. Built in her memory and as a declaration of his love for her. It took 22 years to complete the entire complex of builds and grounds.



The emperor was obsessed with ensuring that everything was precisely and exactly perfect. He toured the grounds regularly to ensure that there was not one imperfection. Everything must be done well. All work must be completed at the highest standards. So obsessed was the emperor during the construction of the building, with keeping

1 Luke 2:14

the site neat and clean, that the workers were required to clean up the entire site of all tools and debris each day before going home.

One evening, as the workers were preparing to leave, the emperor angrily asked who was going to move a large box in the middle of the main room of the building. It was then that one of the emperor's advisers had to remind him of his wife's temporary resting place while the construction was being completed. The emperor had been so engrossed in the project he had forgotten why the project was started. That large box was his wife's coffin.

Christmas is like that. We here know what it's about. We know, and we're excited about it. Outside these walls however, there are many making all sorts of plans and planning all sorts of projects. They are spending money they would otherwise not spend. They are taking trips they otherwise might not take. All to celebrate... What? What are the non-Christians celebrating? Why do they buy gifts? Why do they shop, eat, and enjoy the festival?

They have forgotten the reason for the season. They have become obsessed with the celebration and forgotten what we are celebrating. They have also forgotten that our celebration is more than a remembrance of things that have been. It is also a celebration of things that will be. Jesus was born one evening to a young, and very poor, couple. Our celebration is to wish Him a happy birthday. Our celebration is also to give praise to Him for what He has done, and what He will do.

He will be back. He will return and when He does it will not be meek and mild. It will be with power and authority. His entrance will be the most grand and regal thing anyone has ever seen. When He does return all those who forgot, dismissed, and disregarded Him and His first coming, will discover The Terminator has come for them. There will be no escape. There will be great regret. There will be, as the Bible puts it, weeping and gnashing of teeth.²



But what about us? What will The Terminator's return be like for us. Will it be terrifying and frightening? Will it be horrible? Will we, as the Bible puts it, beg the mountains to fall on us, so that we do not have to face Him³? No! Not at all! We did not ignore, disregard, and dismiss His first coming. We did not forget Him and cast Him aside when we made our plans and planned our celebrations. We remembered Him, worshiped Him, and thanked Him for the gracious mercy He has shown to us. We have been kind to the people around us, reflecting the love of Christ through our actions. We have, by His grace and mercy, been obedient and when necessary repentant.

So when Jesus returns it will be joyful. It will be a time to celebrate. To jump, shout, and cheer to the skies. It will be a time to join the angelic throng of song that will peal across the heavens because we will be heading home.

² Luke 13:28

³ Hosea 10:8



That is why Jesus is coming. That is what Christmas is all about. That is the wonder, the miracle, and the reason for the merriment. That is why we opened our worship with the song Hark the Herold Angels Sing. Because the birth of the Christ is proclaimed to all of Heaven and Earth. That is why we sing with the angels. That is why we walk with the shepherds. That is why we will journey with the wisemen very soon. Because Jesus Christ our Savior is born. We, like the angels, the shepherds, and the wisemen, call to the world begging them to “Come and worship Christ, the new born King.”

Amen.