

# THIRD TO LAST SUNDAY

**November 8 2020**

Exodus 32:1-20

I Thess. 4:13-18

Matthew 24:15-28

## ***Standing...***

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Well, we've made it! We've made it to the conclusion of the Church Year—  
and our texts for today and the next two weeks,  
draw our attention to the Age before the End.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, though the inspired words of the Apostles and Prophets,  
You have revealed the truth which leads us to know salvation through Your Son Jesus  
Christ. Might You now sanctify us by the truth—for Your Word is truth. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

120 years—(Genesis 6:3)

This was the period of time God determined to give Mankind.

As rebellion and rejection rose, His patience had worn thin.

This time was given that people might turn from their idolatry,  
to abandon their evil ways.

It was time mercifully granted so as to repent and believe.

Because at the end of those 120 years,

judgement would commence—

and nothing could stop it.

Since "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17),

and God does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23),

God in His kindness,

sent a preacher—a preacher ordained to preach Law and Gospel,

repentance and the forgiveness of sins—(2 Peter 2:5).

A preacher who would tell of the upcoming judgment  
and subsequent condemnation.

A preacher,

whose voice, by the end of the day, would be hoarse

yet that would not stop him.

When he wasn't preaching...  
 he was building a boat—a big boat—an Ark,  
 so as to escape the coming judgment.

With Noah's preaching, and his massive construction project,  
 God gave the people living in that day someone to hear and something to see,  
 both given as warnings of what was to come.

That brings us to our Gospel text.

Judgement is coming to Israel, for God's patience wore thin.  
 I mean, God had come to them in the flesh,  
 always calling Israel, always wanting to gather them—  
 enlighten them—to save them!  
 But they refused.

What you heard in our Gospel text is what Jesus told His disciples  
 after they left the Temple.

However, while in the Temple Jesus spoke to all who would listen.  
 It would be His final preaching before His crucifixion.

Sadness had filled His compassionate heart as He preaches,  
 because the religious leaders, scribes and Pharisees continue to reject Him.  
 Judas is already conspiring with them to have Jesus killed.

And so, He speaks sharp, biting words of condemnation.  
 But in doing so, it's one more opportunity for Jesus to preach to the crowds—  
 warning them of the coming judgment  
 but also pointing out the love and grace and patience God has for sinners.

Before leaving the Temple, Jesus says directly to the scribes and the Pharisees,

*"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?  
 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and  
 crucify and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so  
 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous  
 Able to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the  
 sanctuary and the altar (Matthew 24:33-35)"*

And then note these words, Jesus says,

*"Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation (Matthew 24:36)."*

Jesus then makes one final plea,

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate (Matthew 24:37-38)!"*

That's the backdrop to what Jesus later tells His disciples.

As they admired the Temple—46 years in the making,  
Jesus tells them,

*"You see all these things, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

Jesus still speaks about the judgement to come—just like Noah did in his day.

That holy temple, which God made holy by dwelling in it  
had already been desecrated, and made into a den of thieves.

It was a place where God's prophets were murdered,  
and ground zero of the blind leading the blind.

They exchanged the very mercy of God who sat on the mercy  
seat for their own self-righteousness, teaching others that  
the way to a right relationship with God was through the  
keeping of the law.

And thus, it would be destroyed—

the Temple, the priesthood, the sacrificial system—  
the City of Peace—forever altered.

When will this happen?

Jesus gives them no time frame—but,  
rather something to see—something to look for.

It's called the abomination of desolation—which was spoken of by Daniel.

All Jewish boys grew up reading Daniel,  
so the disciples knew what Jesus was talking about,

Jesus told them when you see this—the abomination of desolation,  
this setting up of pagan worship inside the Temple,

know that is going to set off an intense persecution—  
bloodshed and suffering that you've never seen before.

The disciples realize they cannot altar this—  
 There's no green wire they can cut at the last second to avert it.  
 It's coming. And when you see it, run.  
 Don't grab anything—just go,  
 or you'll be swept up in the destruction.

So, what were these disciples, soon to be apostles, to do before the judgement came?  
 Build bomb shelters?  
 Stock-pile food and ammo?

No—they were to preach.

Just. Like. Noah.

Just. Like. Jesus.

They were to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins.  
 Jesus even told them,

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, [how?] baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit [is that all? No] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Now, it turns out that from the time Jesus said this,  
 to when the abomination of desolation was set up,  
 there was a span of 40 years.  
 Forty years—graciously offered as the Apostles preached the Gospel,  
 made disciples and built the Church.

Yet, in forty years, judgment came to Jerusalem, and it was brutal.  
 No mercy was shown to Jerusalem's inhabitants,  
 even to pregnant mothers and infants.  
 Everyone was slaughtered.

But there were Christians who heeded our Lord's word—  
 they heeded what the Apostles taught them and they fled.  
 The Gospel seed was then planted and the Church continued.

Beloved, judgment came in the waters of the Flood in the days of Noah. But before they did, there was given 120 years—time to repent.

Judgment came by means of the Romans in the days of the Apostles. But before it did, there was given 40 years—time to repent.

Judgement is coming again—and Covid, is just a little, teeny, tiny taste of it.  
 Just the birth pangs.  
 For we endure wars and threat of worse war.  
 We've grown numb to the mass shootings and terrorism.  
     Natural disasters seem to be getting worse and growing more frequent.  
     Doctors kill babies in the name of "health care."  
     Morality has never been lower,  
         men never crueller,  
         the family never less realized or recognized.  
             On top of all that there is large scale apostasy.  
             People are falling away from the faith.  
                 The Church barely exists in Europe,  
                 and it's dying in the States.

As this rebellion and rejection rises, God's patience wears thin.

So, when will this judgement come?

I don't know precisely, but I do know this, you have been given today—  
 right now—to turn from your sins,  
     from your grudges and pride,  
     and from your dark lusts.

And for those who believe that Christ has given His life for you,  
 that your sins are forgiven because of what He has done,  
 Jesus says...

Do not fear, I have given you My word—a word which cannot fail, promises which will  
 not pass away.

I have given You, My body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins and the  
 strengthening of your faith—which will need to be strong in days that are to come.  
 I have given you as well faithful messengers to give you these gifts on My behalf.

So, cling to these things and these things alone so as to endure  
 both this coming tribulation and the judgment that will follow.

In the holy name of Jesus, Amen. **Standing...**

And now may the peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in  
 Christ Jesus, Amen.