Third Last Sunday of the Church Year—November 8, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! O Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you."

We've entered the last three Sundays of the Church Year, and tone of this Sunday appears quite different than last Sunday when it was All Saints Day. We went from the vision of our future glory before the throne of the Lamb with all God's saints to the abomination of desolation. It appears different but today, it's the same Lord and it's still the same church. The solace of the Church Triumphant shines brightly before the eyes of the Church Militant.

The words of Jesus today, then, serve as a warning. When Jesus gives you a warning though, he doesn't simply leave you in limbo without direction. Jesus warns you to flee but directs you to where you are to go. He instructs you where you are to find him and his gifts as you go through this world and you see what you have here and now and what that means for your life to come.

With those things in mind, listen again to what Jesus is saying to you today. "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."

It's easy to get lost in the details and it's not to say the details aren't important, they are yet the overall message your Lord speaks to you in these words from Holy Week are for you to look at the world around you and what this all means for you as a Christian. You live by faith as a Christian. This isn't some abstract platitude but the reality of your existence in this world. How one lives by faith is important because there are real means to which your faith clings. In this world, however, you are tempted to walk not just by sight but by rumors, lies, and falsehood. You are tempted to walk not by the Scriptures but by another word that leads you into sin, despair, and other great shame or vice with what you see surrounding you and speaks to you and draws your sinful man in close speaking to your heart.

The severity of this world is overwhelming so much so that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. The abomination of desolation Jesus refers to occurred in the past but it's still applicable today as you see so many abominable things at every turn and often packaged up so as to appear good or even godly. Wars are never ending, Christians are being persecuted, babies are being killed in the womb in the name of health care, the basic and fundamental institutions of society such as marriage, the family, and the leadership of men are being mocked and attacked, and the church appears to have lost its voice or capitulates to the world. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see the sad state of this in these times. We hear these things and we see the signs of the end as Jesus himself mentions these things as signs of the end in the Scriptures.

Be warned though. The false hopes that lure you are found in promises a better life here and now at the expense of faithfulness to God or that you need something in place of God or more than what God gives. But you see the devil knows this too and what he desires is for you to turn inward and/or away from the word of God. The devil and the fallen world offer something more and offers a trust in that which is not God alone and then packages it up as good and right and what appears to be godly so as to lie to our consciences that what is being done is good, right, and salutary.

The Old Testament reading today is a great example of this as the people grew impatient and wanted to make gods to lead them. Interestingly, they took the gold that adorned their ears, the organ God created for them to hear his word and made a golden calf. They told the people that "these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up of the land of Egypt." What happened next was an abomination of desolation in and of itself. Moses recorded, "When Aaron saw this, he built

an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." The word used there in Hebrew is not the word for Lord but none other than YHWH. It's the very name of God revealed to Moses on the mountain. It's the name of God, the one true God, who led them out of the land of Egypt, gave them the Commandments, and was leading them to the land he promised them. They built false gods and attached the true God's name to it.

Today, though, there is something else he warns you about and is something just as deadly today. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.'"

Jesus doesn't want you to fall prey to the devil and his tricks. It's one thing to see events of violence and clear blatant disregard for the word of God and it's another thing when things are done in the name of the God and packaged up as godly. That's the dangerous thing about which Jesus speaks today. It's why we pray for faithfulness to his word and that it is be preserved among us. "Preserve You Word, O Savior!"

Yet we try to bring God's name into things in our lives that are far from godly. "What does it matter if I refuse to repent, we are saved by grace not works. What does it matter if the doctrine is different so long as we believe in Jesus? Do I really need to go to church because I pray?" Those are more obvious ways but how about when we make decisions in our life and rather than seeing where God has placed us and looking to his commandments, we concoct all sorts of things. Look at how we can rationalize decisions in our lives thinking not following the clear word of God but wanting what we want, how we want it, and then attaching God's name to whatever we decide or whatever has claimed to be of God. This is how the devil likes to work and feed into our fallen flesh.

We pride ourselves on ignorance or at least in shutting our ears to the voice of God as he speaks through his holy word. Jesus warns us. Just because someone or thing claims to be the Christ doesn't mean he is. Just because something packages itself up as godly doesn't mean it is. And that's where, within church, we are tempted to be drawn away from God's word. We may have good intentions and desire the things of God but the devil preys on that. He wants us to be godly and religious according to our image. He wants the false gods with God's holy name attached to it. God calls us to be faithful to him all things and find our sufficiency and contentment in him alone.

What does all of this matter? Is just so we can have things "right" and be able to say "well actually" when someone says something incorrect? No, the purpose in all of this, let alone just to be faithful to God's word is there is something in it. Hear again what God said through St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." The Thessalonians believed in a resurrection but they were uninformed. Their loved ones who died before Jesus returned, they thought were missing out. They believed in Jesus but being uniformed they mourned and it was a mourning without hope. This is why St. Paul teaches them, it's why God used him to preach and to write the word of God he was written to write. It's as he wrote in Romans 15, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Jesus warns but he also instructs. He warns you about false christs but he also teaches you not to follow them. It's no coincidence too that in just a couple of chapters from this that the Lord will recline with his disciples and teach them where the true Christ is to be found. As the true Christ was heading toward the cross to shed his blood for the redemption of the world he gave them his Supper and promised this is where he is to be found. Not long after that, after his atoning death and his resurrection from the dead, he sent his Apostles out to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Triune God and teaching them to observe all things he had commanded them and

what was his promise? “I am with you always even to the end of the age.” This is where he is to be found in Holy Baptism and his word. Jesus comes to you now in his mercy, in his promise, and he comes to you to forgive.

It’s tough, then, going through this world because we are tempted to think that things that appear good and godly must be right but this is why you are to listen to God’s word and study it. You are to be disciples, students of the word who sit and listen to Jesus and what he teaches you. Going through your life in these latter days the Lord comforts you. He doesn’t send you on a wild goose chase to try and figure out God’s will in your life, his purposes for you, or even if he really is there for you. God’s word is sufficient and he is with you and for you as you receive his means of grace.

On this day know who you are where Jesus is. You are baptized into Christ. You have Jesus himself and here in this place, there is no abomination of desolation rather there is forgiveness life and salvation given in and through his word and sacraments. You have a confidence and comfort that you belong to Jesus and come what may you will not be put to shame or over come by sin, death, and the assaults of the devil. You have the victory in Christ.

In all that is the end of days and in all you are assaulted by from the devil, the world, and your own fallen flesh the Lord shines forth in the midst of all of that. His faithfulness and mercy cannot lie nor will it fail you. “For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’” Christ is yours and he won’t abandon you. His with you along the way; today, tomorrow and every day and his word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

Not only that but in this reading today there is another word of comfort and it’s that Jesus is indeed coming and sooner rather than later. You are his elect and he will keep you in the faith. He will protect you and see to it that even if man may destroy your body, they can’t destroy your soul and Jesus will raise up your body on the Last Day. Jesus says, “For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” Jesus comes, he comes for you, he comes for his church. Repent of your sin and go running to where Jesus has promised to be and you will not be caught unaware or uniformed, but you will know Christ and his benefits.

And you see, that’s the thing in all this and it’s much like last week as odd as that may sound. You know your future today just as you heard it last week. The readings today don’t have the image of the Lamb before the throne but it’s the same Lamb who has redeemed you and the Lamb is none other than the Son of Man who comes again. Because when he comes again just as he promises, the eternal image of peace and glory is what awaits you.

Going through this world and all the terrible things you must endure take heart dear flock of God. You have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Your sin is forgiven and you have peace with God. You are not alone as you are together God’s saints in this place and with those who have gone before you as you heard last Sunday in that glorious image. Jesus is near and so go through this world and look to the horizon. Jesus is near, in fact he is here for you. There’s nothing abominable or false about that so taste and see that he is good. Cling to him and be at peace in the Lamb who was slain but is raised and has you and your future in his hands now and forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.