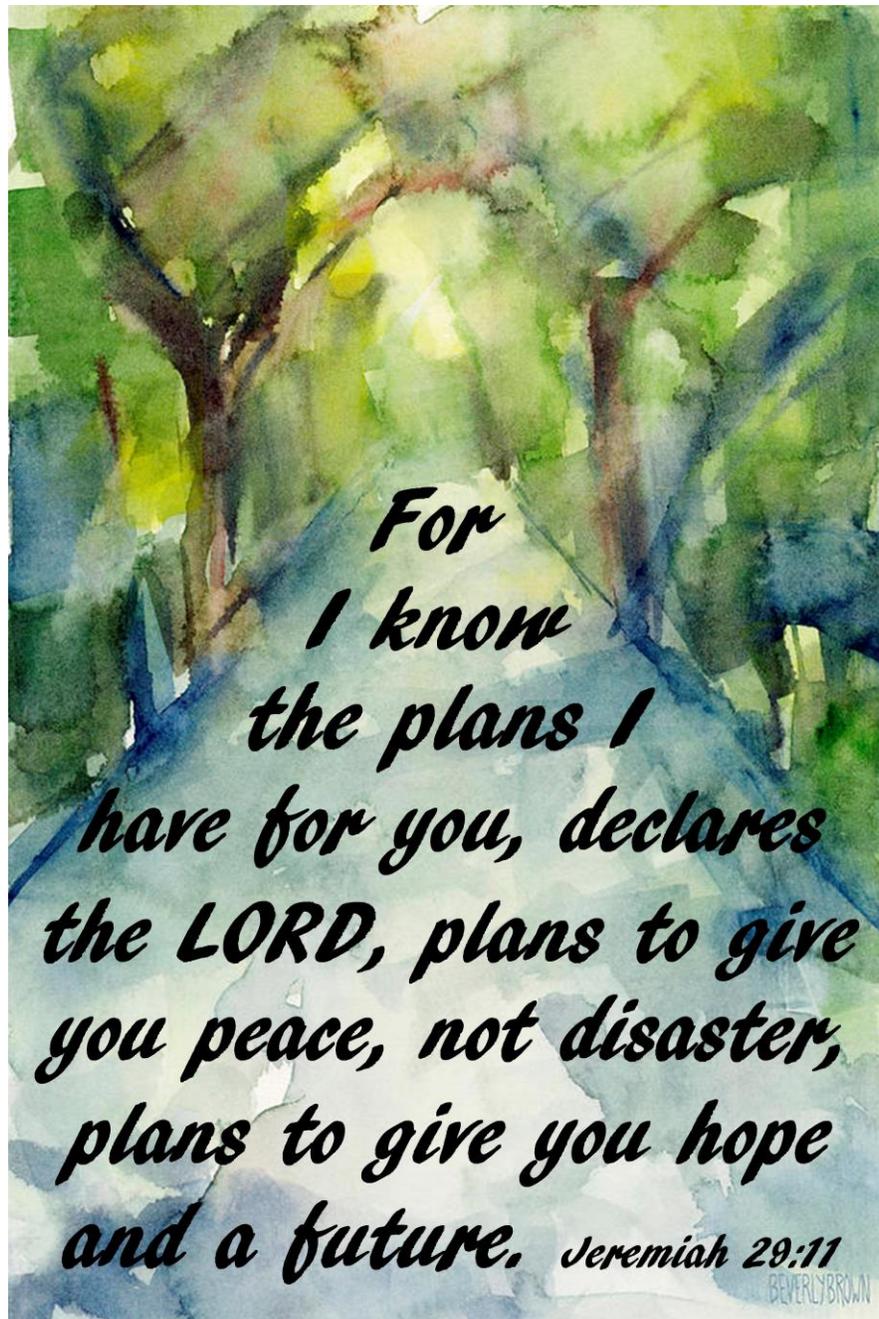


St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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November 8, 2020

LAST JUDGMENT

IN OUR WORSHIP THIS MONTH ... we are in the season of End Times. In our world, both in the news and in nature, we are reminded that we are in the end times of this world and the end times of our own lives. This year - pulled by our school theme verse, Jeremiah 29:11 - we go to the prophet Jeremiah for God's promise and his wisdom in facing these end times.

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we live in a "post-truth" age. Opinions, emotions, and feelings are more important than facts in determining* "truth." (*Many in our world today would argue that truth can't be determined.) Now we are all entitled to our own "truth" and our own sense of right and wrong.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are reminded of an age-old Truth: as the world falls in love with its own lies, God will judge.

OPENING HYMN

"Before You, God, the Judge of All"
Hymn 306

Before you, God, the Judge of all,
With grief and shame I humbly fall.
I see my sins against you, Lord,
My sins of thought and deed and word.
They press me sore; to you I flee:
O God, be merciful to me!

O Lord, my God, to you I pray:
Oh, cast me not in wrath away!
Let your good Spirit ne'er depart,
But let him draw to you my heart
That truly penitent I be:
O God, be merciful to me!

O Jesus, let your precious blood
Be to my soul a cleansing flood.
Turn not, O Lord, your guest away,
But grant that justified I may
Go to my house at peace to be:
O God, be merciful to me!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Jeremiah 23:9-22 (select)

Concerning the prophets:

My heart is broken within me;
all my bones tremble.
I am like a drunken man,
like a man overcome by wine,
because of the LORD
and his holy words.

The prophets follow an evil course
and use their power unjustly.
“Both prophet and priest are godless;
even in my temple I find their wickedness,” declares the LORD.

“Among the prophets of Samaria
I saw this repulsive thing:
They prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.
And among the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen something horrible:

They commit adultery and live a lie.
They strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that no one turns from his wickedness.
They are all like Sodom to me;
the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.”

This is what the LORD Almighty says:

“Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you;
they fill you with false hopes.
They speak visions from their own minds,
not from the mouth of the LORD.
They keep saying to those who despise me,
‘The LORD says: You will have peace.’
And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts
they say, ‘No harm will come to you.’

But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD
to see or to hear his word?
Who has listened and heard his word?

See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath,
a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked.
The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart.

In days to come
you will understand it clearly.
I did not send these prophets,
yet they have run with their message;
I did not speak to them,
yet they have prophesied.
But if they had stood in my council,
they would have proclaimed my words to my people
and would have turned them from their evil ways
and from their evil deeds.

RITE OF CONFESSION

- M: In the name of our God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hidden. Amen.
- C: O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy, and in your faithfulness, come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgement, for no one living is righteous before you. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide you face from me, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God.**
- C: Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a troubled and repentant sinner, confess that I have sinned against you in my thoughts, my words, and my actions. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I am distressed by the sins that trouble me and am deeply sorry for them.**
- M: Jesus says to his people: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven." His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?
- C: Yes, I believe.**
- M: Because of the promise of our Savior Jesus, I forgive you all of your sins. Be assured that you are a dear child of God and an heir of eternal life.
- C: O Lord, my God, I called to you for help, and you answered me. I thank you for the love you have shown me in Jesus Christ, my Savior. Through him you have rescued me from the guilt of my sin and given me the peace of forgiveness. Help me fight against temptation, correct whatever wrongs I can, and serve you and those around me with love and good works. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.**

LESSON

Matthew 7:15-23

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that

does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

HYMN

“O Lord, Look Down from Heaven”

Hymn 205

O Lord, look down from heav'n, behold,
And let your pity waken.
How few are we within your fold,
Your saints by all forsaken;
True faith seems quenched on ev'ry hand;
Your Word is not allowed to stand.
Dark times have us o'er taken.

O God, root out all heresy,
And of false teachers rid us
Who proudly say, “Now where is he
Who shall our speech forbid us?
By right or might we shall prevail;
What we determine cannot fail;
We want no lord and master!”

Therefore said God, “I must arise
The poor my help are needing.
To me ascend my people's cries,
And I have heard their pleading.
For them my saving Word shall fight
And fearlessly and sharply smite,
The poor with might defending.”

Defend your truth, O God, and stay
This evil generation,
And from the error of its way
Keep your own congregation.
The wicked ev'rywhere abound
And would your little flock confound,
But you are our salvation!

SERMON

Jeremiah 23:9-22 (select)

November 8, 2020 - Last Judgment Jeremiah 26:9-22 (select)

“Don’t worry. It’s ok. It’ll be alright.” We like those words, don’t we? “Be true to yourself. Do what feels right to you.” Popular words, aren’t they? “You’re fine just the way you are.” It’s easy to like those words, whether they’re true or not. At the time of our lesson, those words were not true. In our world today, more often than not, those words are not true. So often they are the words of a world seducing itself, cheering itself on in ungodly wickedness. But they were what the people wanted to hear then, and they are what our world wants to hear today. So what do truth-tellers do?

Jeremiah was a truth-teller. But before he was a truth-teller, he was someone who listened to the truth, the truth he was to tell. It wasn’t easy. His legs were shaky. His head was spinning. Like he had too much wine. Except he hadn’t been drinking. No, he had been listening to the truth he had to tell. And the truth shook Jeremiah; it broke his heart.

What truth was it that had Jeremiah so shook up? What truth did the LORD have for Jeremiah to tell? It wasn’t: “Don’t worry. It’s ok. It’ll be alright.” It wasn’t: “Be true to yourself. Do what feels right to you.” It wasn’t: “You’re fine just the way you are.” No, the truth that the LORD had for Jeremiah to tell was judgment. Not judgment on the world out there, but God’s judgment on the prophets and priests of his people.

Why? God’s people were living the life of the world. God wanted his truth-telling prophets and priests to tell the truth, to warn his people, to turn them from their sin. And if they wouldn’t turn from their sin, God expected his priests and prophets to tell the truth and announce God’s judgment. Instead of telling the truth, the priests and prophets were telling people who despised God: **“You will have peace.”** And for people stubborn in their sin, instead of telling them the truth and warning of God’s judgment, the prophets and priests were telling those stubborn sinners: **“No harm will come to you.”** It was what the people wanted to hear, but it wasn’t the truth. So now it was time for Jeremiah to tell the truth, to announce God’s judgment. Judgment on the liars who were telling procrastinating sinners: “Don’t worry; it’s ok; it’ll be alright.” Judgment

on the liars who were telling the unrepentant: "You're fine just the way you are." And judgment for those cheerleaders cheering: "Be true to yourself; do what feels right to you." Judgment for those cheerleaders leading people away from God's Truth into their own so-called "truth."

But God's judgment in our lesson wasn't just judgment on prophet and priest. And even if it were, I'm not the only prophet and priest in this room, am I? I'm not the only "truth-teller" here. You are God's royal priesthood; you have God's praises to tell; you have God's Truth to tell. But how many times haven't we latched on to the lies of the world so we could feel better in our sin? How many times haven't we told those lies, cheering people on in their sin? Our lesson cuts in two ways doesn't it? Judgment for sharing the lies of the world instead of telling the Truth, judgment for listening to the lies of the world instead of listening to the Truth.

God wasn't thinking just a slap on the wrist. He saw a storm of wrath swirling down around the heads of his people. Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon were on the way. I wonder if he was thinking of something more. In Romans, Paul writes: "**The wrath of God is now being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.**" How? Sometimes God works his judgment this way - he gives people what they want. If people won't listen to the truth, he takes his truth away from them. For some, God's judgment is this - those who think they know better than God, those who just have to go their own way, they get so twisted in arguing against God, they get so stuck in their own way, that all they can do is fight against God's way, and obsess against God, no matter how miserable it makes them. We see that in so many ways today, don't we?

That obsession against God's Truth is part of God's judgment on this world, but it's not the only way God works his judgment. In our lesson, when God heard what the prophets and priests were doing, how they were soft-pedaling his judgment on sin, when he saw his people holding to their sin and growing in their sin, how did God see them? He saw them as Sodom and Gomorrah. And you know God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah - fire and brimstone followed by the fires of an eternal hell.

What do I do with that? I can cover my ears and argue real loud. I can blame others. I can make up some really fine sounding excuses. But arguing and blaming and making excuses doesn't change the Truth. I can try to make myself too busy to hear what God says, but ignoring the Truth doesn't change the Truth. I can try to make my mind go numb with drink and drug and video screen, but numbing the Truth doesn't change the Truth. Or I can try to do better, to be a better "Truth-teller." That sounds good, doesn't it? But living better doesn't undo my lies, the lies I've already lived, the lies I've already shared. Truth be told, no matter what truth I try to make up for myself, I need a better Truth.

Jesus is that Truth I need, the Truth we need. Jesus doesn't say: "Be true to yourself." Jesus says: "Deny yourself." Jesus doesn't say: "Oh, I like your excuses." Can you think of a time Jesus ever said: "I like your excuses"? Jesus doesn't point us to the "truth-tellers" of the world who tell us to do our own thing. No, Jesus calls us to himself: "My sheep listen to me; my sheep follow me." And when we listen, when we follow, what do we find? We aren't content to keep on in our sin.

Instead, the Truth of Jesus frees us from our sin. Jesus doesn't just turn a blind eye to our sin, or just turn his back on our guilt. No, he really, truly frees us from our sin and guilt. How? First, he took it as his own. What sin has a special hold on you? What guilt especially tears you apart? No matter what you might feel, no matter what the devil might be telling you - Jesus took that sin, that guilt, as his own and he took it to the cross. There Jesus paid for it, died for it; there Jesus paid for you and died for you. With Jesus, you are forgiven, freed from under God's judgment, freed from your guilt to live a new life with Jesus. At the same time, with Jesus, no matter what the voices of temptation say, with Jesus, you are set free from the power of sin. It might not feel that way. It might take some retraining on how you think. It will be a struggle, but sin doesn't have to be your master. You are forgiven and set free to live the life that Jesus has for you.

And what is the life that Jesus has for you? Jeremiah has some great promises for you that we will hear the next couple weeks. I wish we had more time to get into them today. But let me just say this: No matter what you have going in your life, Jesus invites you: “Come to me; follow me; and I will keep you safe.” And that’s the truth! Amen.

HYMN

**“Speak, O Lord”
Hymn 735**



1 Speak, O Lord, as we come to you To re -
 2 Teach us, Lord, full o - be - di - ence, Ho - ly
 3 Speak, O Lord, and re - new our minds; Help us



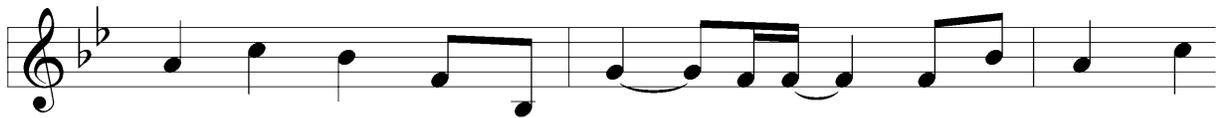
ceive the food of your Ho - ly Word.
 rev - er - ence, true hu - mil - i - ty.
 grasp the heights of your plans for us.



Take your truth, plant it deep in us; Shape and
 Test our thoughts and our at - ti - tudes In the
 Truths un - changed from the dawn of time, That will



fash - ion us in your like - ness That the
 ra - di - ance of your pur - i - ty. Cause our
 e - cho down through e - ter - ni - ty. And by



light of Christ might be seen to - day In our acts of
 faith to rise, cause our eyes to see Your ma - jes - tic
 grace we'll stand on your pro - mis - es, And by faith we'll



love and our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and ful -
 love and au - thor - i - ty. Words of pow'r that can
 walk as you walk with us. Speak, O Lord, as your



fill in us All your pur - pos-es for your
nev - er fail, Let their truth pre-vail o - ver
Church is built And you fill the earth with your



glo - ry.
un - be-lief.
glo - ry.

BIDDING PRAYER

M: Let us pray for the whole church, that our gracious Father would defend her from the devil and keep her faithful to her Lord:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, you have revealed your saving name to the world through Jesus Christ our Lord. Protect us from assaults of the evil one, and help us remain faithful to your Word so that, in every adversity, we may stand firm in our faith and give ourselves fully to our Savior's work, through Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

M: Let us pray for those who serve in the public ministry and for all people of God:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, you rule over all things for the good of your people. Preserve us from divisive spirits and false teachers. Give your servants the grace to proclaim Christ joyfully in word and deed so that all who hear them may come to know their Savior better and be strengthened for their lives of service, through Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

M: Let us pray for those who are being instructed in the Word that they remain firm in the simple faith of Baptism:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, you make us your own dear children by the washing of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit. Give strength to all who are buried with Christ in Baptism that each day they may die to sin and rise again to live a new and holy life, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Let us pray for our earthly government, our rulers, and all who are in authority:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, you have established earthly government to keep a measure of order in this dying world and to protect us from the disorder of sin. Give to all rulers the wisdom to govern well and to all citizens the desire to obey them, so that we may live peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Let us pray that our gracious Father would protect us and our communities from the many earthly calamities that threaten us:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, on all sides we are surrounded by danger from wars and famine, from disease and pestilence, with the devil begrudging us every minute of our lives. Protect us from all these miseries so that your name may still be glorified in them and so that we may safely pass through them to your heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Let us pray for those who are outside the Church, that they may come to know the one, true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, your Son was lifted up on the cross so that he might draw all people to himself. Through the proclamation of your Word, mercifully gather from the nations a people that are your very own, that we may join together around your throne in glory to praise and thank you forever, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Let us pray for our enemies and for all those who hate us:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, no one can harm us without grieving you whose name we bear. We ask that you would change the hearts of those who work against us and who hate us without reason. Give them repentance and life so that they may be glad with us and find joy in your love, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Let us pray for all who suffer under cross and trial:

Silent prayer.

M: Almighty and everlasting God, you sent your Son into the world to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. Help those who are suffering for your name's sake and who are struggling against temptation so that they may not be overwhelmed with sadness but find relief in your grace, through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

M: Finally, let us pray for all those things for which our Lord would have us ask in the words he himself has taught us:

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"God's Word Is Our Great Heritage"

Hymn 293

God's word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way;
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations.

OFFERING (Please fill out friendship pads on pews)

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan this
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