

2nd Sunday in End Times: Last Judgment – Year B - November 8, 2009

Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

John 5:19-30

Pastor Paul Horn

No need to worry about the future

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

²⁴ “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Heating bills will be coming soon to a mailbox near you. Are you prepared to pay them? The flu season is upon us. You may be getting to know your doctor better. Consumer spending is still down which means we are still in a recession. Does this mean you may lose your job? Giving in our church has remained steady for one year; it has not decreased, nor has it risen for several months. Does this mean we will be able to operate as a congregation as we have the past 15 years? Are you worried about the future? Since we’re talking about future events, are you worried about your last day? Could today be your last day? You could drive home after church and someone could run a red light and smash! Or tomorrow, a disgruntled soldier or crazed maniac could burst into your place of employment with guns blazing. Your last day could be 30 or 40 years from today. Your last day is the day you will stand before the throne of the judge of all creation. Are you worried? Should you be? Jesus tells us not to worry about our clothing, our food, our shelter; he promises to provide all that we need. He tells us not to worry about the future of our congregation. If we continue to do his work, that is, faithfully proclaim the gospel, he will bless it. And about your last day? He says that you do not need to worry about it, as we’ll see in Jesus’ dissertation to the Jews in Jerusalem.

Have you ever been criticized for doing something good or just trying to help? That’s what happened to Jesus in our story from John’s gospel this morning. Jesus had just healed man who had been a paralytic for 38 years. But Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were very strict about no work on the Sabbath, stricter than God had

commanded them! They even made additional rules. They saw this healed man walking around, carrying the mat he used to lie on. They criticized for this! The man said, “The one who healed me said, ‘Pick up your mat and walk!’” They didn’t care that the man had been healed. They were more concerned about the man who was telling people to break Sabbath day regulations. They found Jesus and he replied, “**My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.**” Oh, the Jews hated him all the more. Not only had he healed on the Sabbath day and told this man to carry his mat, but he also called God his own Father, making himself equal to God!

Jesus answered them... In vs19,30 he said, “I’m only doing what my Father in heaven has asked me to do. In fact, you will see greater things than these.” You think this was awesome, that I performed a successful, surgery that no doctor could ever do. Without using his hands, he just says the word, and gives a paralytic healthy legs again. Just wait...

²¹ **For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.** What greater thing will the Son do? He will give life! Now, we usually think of God the Father as the one who gave us life, the Creator of all things living. King David professed in the Psalms, “**For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.**” But Jesus said that his Father gave this same power to his Son, to have life in himself, to give life to anyone he pleases. Jesus himself said on several occasions, “**I am the life.**” He then proved it by raising his friend Lazarus from the grave; giving life to Jairus’ daughter; raising the young man from Nain. But Jesus was talking about another kind of life that he would give. We have a beautiful picture in Jesus’ words, “**Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life.**” He was talking about spiritual life. Thank God that Jesus has the power to give spiritual life.

From conception, from birth, you were alive physically. But spiritually... you were dead; dead because we all inherited a sinful nature from our parents. But Jesus came to bring life to you. Through your baptism you were raised from the deadness of your unbelief to a newness of life through faith in Christ Jesus. Through the washing with water and the Word you were born again. For at your baptism you were buried with Christ Jesus. Your sins of worry and fear, all buried with him. Your sinful nature, death, Satan, hell itself, Christ carried them all to his grave. But in the flesh he rose again to prove his victory was complete. So also through baptism, you have been raised to a new life! A living, breathing faith was created in your heart. That faith now believes the Words of Jesus. That new creature desires to please Jesus. This new faith life of yours does not doubt, is not afraid or worried, but puts its trust in him who says, “I am life!” Greater things than healing a lame man? Yes! He has given you spiritual life! But not just life here on earth, but forever in heaven!

vs24a **“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; he has crossed over from death to life.** How certain is life eternal in Paradise? The verb tense in the original text literally says, *You have eternal life in your possession now and it will continue to be in your possession in the future*, and when he says, ...**he has crossed over from death to life**, Jesus speaks as if it’s already happened.

Imagine that today I said, “I’ve purchased all your Christmas gifts already, for you and your family. But they’re stuffed in my closet at home. When you look under the tree on Christmas morning, they will be there! You can’t see them, but they’re still in your possession.

You new life in heaven is yours now. The guarantee is that Jesus himself passed from death to life. His empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning means your grave will be empty on the Last Day. Jesus says that you have already passed from death to life! There is no need to worry about the future, for Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! In fact...

vs25 **I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.** After church, let's all go to the new veteran's cemetery on 31W by Fort Knox, and I want each of you to pick out a random grave and call to that dead soldier, "Come out! Rise up!" How many will climb out of the ground? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from eternity, is the voice who spoke, "Let there be sun, moon and stars," and they appeared instantly. This was the same voice that said, "Let the waters teem with living creatures," and it happened instantly! This is the same voice, who in human flesh, called to his friend, "Lazarus, come out!" And he walked out of his tomb after lying there, rotting for four days. This is the same voice that said to Jairus' dead 12-year-old daughter, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" This is the same voice that said to the widow's only son who had died, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" And he immediately sat up in his coffin.

That same voice will cry out on the Last Day, "Come up out of your graves and live!" And all will rise! Again, he has proved it already, by raising the dead. His guarantee is that just as he was raised from death, he will resurrect you from your grave. His sure and certain promise to you is again found in your baptism. You have been buried with him into his death through baptism, so also through your baptism, you have been raised with Christ Jesus through his resurrection. You will rise to live on the Last Day!

It is also interesting to note three small words in this verse that have a huge impact! Jesus says, "**A time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear his voice...**" ...**and has now come!** There is a sense of urgency in those words. It could happen at any time. Either Jesus will call us home through death, or he will come on the clouds with his angels with the trumpet call of God! This does not frighten us, but rather, makes us aware, awake, ready, and waiting for his coming, his calling...

There is no need to fear his voice on the Last Day, the voice so powerful that it made the Israelites tremble at Mount Sinai, a voice described by apostle John in Revelation as many rushing waters, a voice so powerful that it will cause the dead to rise. It's a fearful thought for the unbeliever. But for you, you will hear the calming voice of your Good Shepherd, summoning his sheep home. The same gentle voice speaks to you today through His Word and Sacraments, reassuring, reminding, comforting you, "Your sins are forgiven. Your salvation is complete." This will be the same voice that summons you to stand before him on Judgment Day.

Stand before the Judge? Does that thought make you shake in the knees and your heart pound? Jesus said, "**Those who have done good will rise to live, those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.**" So is he like Santa Claus, checking his list, determining who's been naughty or nice? Will you receive a lump of coal or a stack of presents? It's not like that with the Judge of all humankind. Christ's promise to you is this...

vs24 **whoever hears my word and believes has eternal life and will not be condemned.**

Again, the verb tense Jesus uses indicates that this judgment has already been announced for those who believe in Him as their Savior from sin! It's as if you have a DVD of you standing before the Judge on the Last Day. You pop that DVD into the player and look at the TV! There you are, standing before the throne of God. Your accuser is even there! Satan is trying his last ditch effort to discredit you before the Judge and send you to hell forever. He has a good case. He lists off all the offenses you have ever committed. Yikes, that's a long list! But the Judge replies, "Those are my sins. I took those offenses upon myself as if they were my own and I took them to the cross where I bore the burden of punishment in hell and suffered to the point of death. I was the guilty one. I declare this individual not guilty of their sins!" Thank God that it is he who will judge us on the Last Day. He will base his judgment on his works, not ours. He will judge his life, not ours. He will base his judgment on his death and his resurrection and declare us not guilty. How sure and certain can we be as we stand before the Judge on the Last Day? As sure and certain as his promises, "**Whoever hears my word and believes has eternal life and will not be condemned.**" No need to be afraid...

I was talking to someone on Friday about the massacre at Fort Hood and she said, "Pastor Horn, what is this world coming to?" It's quickly coming to an end, and thank God for that, for the sooner the world comes to an end, the sooner Jesus comes, and the sooner we leave this sinful world behind, and the sooner we leave our wretched sinful flesh and the grave behind us. The sooner we stand before our Judge, the sooner we will see his face shine upon us and the sooner we will be with our Savior forever. To that end we say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen!"