

THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR WHEN THE END COMES!

Well, how has life treated you this past week? Busy? Stress? Have a lot on your mind? We all tend to be so busy with our daily responsibilities to our families, employers or employees, coworkers, relatives, friends; obsessed with eagerness to find the pleasures and self enjoyment in life; so concerned with making ends meet and keeping up with the Jones, that we really do not take the time to consider getting ready for Jesus' return. The truth is: Jesus will come again. Are you ready?

When it comes to the Day of Judgment, probably no one except the Christian even considers this possibility being real. Many people believe that the Day of Judgment will never come because life has been the same for centuries. If the world hasn't ended yet, they reason, it probably never will. They listen to Christians and laugh at the thought of our world ending. Others think that because they seem to get away with sinful behavior, immoral actions, and even evil deeds, no one will ever find out. "Since God did not punish me when I did it," they reason, "He never will!" Still others who belittle Christians in various ways and deny the existence of God, scoff at the idea of the world ever ending, or their ever having to give an account for doing what the Bible says is wrong, evil, and sinful.

A prime example of how the minds of people work to deny that they will ever be held accountable has been in the headlines all last week: the terrible tragedy at Penn State. Apparently many people knew of the evil actions of one coach but did not take any responsibility to do the right thing and protect the children, or they figured no one would hold them accountable for their inaction, or maybe they thought that all their good works at the University entitled them to do nothing. Well, a type of Judgment Day has quickly come for them. You can't hide the truth. It always comes out!

In verses one and two of our text St. Paul tells us that the End will come with great quickness. In Matthew 24:27, Jesus tells us that the End will come like lightning. Lightning travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. That is quick! In our text Paul compares the Second Coming with the speed at which a thief comes in the night. Without notice or advance warning he just appears! Paul's point: always be prepared! There is no time to ready yourself for Judgment Day once you see Jesus coming. In a split second it's here! Instantly, suddenly, immediately! If the most talked about subject in the entire New Testament is the Second coming, why would you think that it will never happen? Are you ready?

In verses four to seven Paul warns us not to be seduced, entrapped, and enthralled with “the darkness.” Darkness symbolizes evil, and sinful behavior. It is associated with self-indulgence and immoral activities. Sin deadens one’s thinking, corrupts one’s moral reasoning, and deafens one’s ears to God’s Word. Sin can lull one into a false sense of spiritual security. Paul urges us to be alert and in self-control. We are to be sober, aware of our spiritual environment as well as our physical world. Paul’s words urge us to live by God’s Word, act as a child of God, associate with godly people, and be involved in God pleasing activities. This way we will be ready for the End. It will come so suddenly that even the fat lady won’t have a chance to sing!

What are your thoughts about the coming Day of the LORD? Some people are terrified of the thought of Day of Judgment. But you my Christian friends have nothing to fear! Yes, many speak of great and awful sufferings of the Great Tribulation that will face unbelievers when the End comes! Yes, it will be a time of great distress, pain, agony, and fear for unbelievers. When they see Jesus coming, there will be no time to repent, no time to change, no time to get right with God. What they have mocked, denied, and ridiculed will become a reality. And finally there are those who find a false security rooted in their ignorance about God. Some believe that if one’s good deeds outscore their bad deeds, God will let them into Heaven. Sorry, but that is faulty logic! So is the reasoning that if there is a God and if He is a loving God, then He would never punish people or send them to hell!

True, God is loving. But God is also a just God and will punish sin. People will be held accountable for their sins. God’s sense of justice demands that there be a Judgment Day. When it comes to sin and evil, you cannot be neutral; there is no fence sitting or middle ground in sin. You can’t know what was going on and what was not going on, remain silent, and think that somehow this protects you from doing the right thing and absolves you from responsibility. It is interesting that many of the men caught up in the Penn State disaster did not abuse anyone. But their silence, their refusal to step forward and protect the children was wrong both criminally and sinfully.

But let’s not be so quick to condemn them and overlook our own sins! Sometimes we can be guilty of self-righteousness, and be tempted to think our sins are not as bad as the sins of others. Have you not read the Commandments? Maybe people need to! God’s Word is clear on this point. Not only do the Commandments forbid us from doing wrong things, but the Commandments demand that we do the right thing. Do you speak out for the rights of the poor, needy, abused children, and the unborn, or do you choose to be silent and pretend sin is not happening? Do you speak up for someone falsely accused? Do you seek both sides before making a

judgment? Do you always defend your neighbor's life, health, marriage, property, and reputation? Don't let the words of Jesus in Mt. 25:42-43 be directed to you! (Read) We cannot silently ignore others suffering. Jesus is coming soon! Hell is hot! Now is the time to repent not just for doing bad things, but also for not doing the right things.

In verse nine of our text St. Paul makes it clear that salvation only comes through Jesus! He makes no apologies for this and neither should we! We are saved only through our faith that Jesus suffered our punishment, shed his blood to pay our debt of sin, died as a sacrifice in our place, and then rose again to life on the third day. This is what the Scriptures clearly teach. As Paul reminds us in Romans 3:28, **"We maintain that a man is justified by faith alone..."** It may not make everyone happy, we may wish it were different, but the Word of God has spoken. It has authority

When the end comes there is nothing for you and me to fear! Do you not know, believe, and experience God's grace and love in Jesus? Then you can be confident that your sins are forgiven. Your debt has been paid in full! You have nothing to fear about the End! St. Paul in 2 Corinthians and St John in Revelation assure believers that God has sealed us. We are guaranteed God's protection when the terrors and horrors of the End strike the unbelievers! For believers, the End is a time of great joy! We will be reunited with our believing departed loved ones; see God visibly; enjoy the fruits of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil, and no longer experience any pain, suffering, tears, or death. We have nothing to fear!

So, **the question of the day is this**: since Jesus is coming again soon, how do we prepare for His Second Coming? As St. Paul told the jailer in Philippi, **"Believe on the LORD Jesus and you will be saved!"** Believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. Believe in God's promises to forgive us and love us. Believe that following Jesus is the best way to live life! Avoid places and people who are likely to tempt you to sin to turn away from God. Walk with Jesus and you will have nothing to fear!

As a "side benefit" for being a part of the worshipping community of believers, we can encourage each other to believe, to repent, and to rejoice in Day of the LORD. As your pastor I pray that not one of you will be unprepared for Jesus' Second Coming and be lost on the Last Day. Rather I pray you will be ready, believe, repent, and be saved!

Jesus is coming again, soon. He promises! As you enjoy life remember, **THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR WHEN THE END COMES!** IJN, amen!