

*“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*

Dear friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed;

The Royal Canadian Farce, in a taping in Newfoundland, has a sketch in which a pollster asks a man, “What is a main issue in the minds of Newfoundlanders today?” The man answered “Tomorrow.” “Tomorrow? What do you mean?” “Let me explain,” the man said. “Newfoundlanders are obsessed with the weather. Take this summer for example: it was the hottest, driest summer in history. It was beautiful! It was so hot you could even swim. The bugs were so big you could barbecue them. It was beautiful, do you understand?” “No, you said tomorrow was on the mind of Newfoundlanders. What about tomorrow?” “Snow and cold for the next two years; we're going to pay for this summer.”

What is the main concern in the minds of people today? I think that many people today would also say that the thing that concerns them the most is tomorrow. We might even say that there are those who are obsessed with tomorrow—constantly worried and concerned about what is going to happen in the days ahead. And, like that man in Newfoundland, we think that if things are going too well today, we are going to have to pay for it someday.

People are worried about tomorrow. That is why some people have to read their horoscope before they do anything else each day. That is why there are those who seek out fortune tellers, because they want someone to give them some insight, some guidance for tomorrow, so that they can be prepared for the unknown.

In part, we can understand the concern that we all feel about tomorrow. After all, there is a great deal of uncertainty in our world. We really don't know from one day to the next all that will happen to us in the days ahead. We could lose our job. We could lose our health. And for that matter, as our text reminds us today, one of these days, tomorrow will never come. All the signs tell us that God's day of judgement and redemption is at hand. We would like to believe that it would be easier if we knew when that day was coming; that it would be easier if we knew what tomorrow will bring. But while we cannot see all that is going to happen to us in the days ahead, we do not need to fear tomorrow. We can face tomorrow with the same hope and confidence that we have for today, for today or tomorrow, or whenever, we can be sure that if it is another day, God is there.

How do we, as God's people approach the days that are yet to be? When we look at Holy Scripture, we see what appears to be an interesting paradox. On the one hand, we are told by Jesus: *“do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* (Matthew 6:34, ESV) And yet, as we begin this new church year today, the message of Advent declares to us: *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.”* (Jeremiah 33:14-16, ESV) Advent points us to tomorrow, to a day that God has planned for our salvation. One of these days God will set everything right that has gone wrong, everything that is wrong in this world and in our lives. Our text reminds us that the signs are all around us that point to the coming of that day. And we are told to watch, to wait and to prepare for that day. We are told to be ready for tomorrow. That's the paradox: how can we not worry about tomorrow, and yet be ready for it at the same time?

In part, the answer is found in remembering the difference between worrying and watching. Just think of all the things that are part of our lives right now. We are all caught up in things that are coming, as we get caught in the busyness of preparing for Christmas. We look at our schedules, and we feel overwhelmed with the many things we have to do. We have to get all that Christmas shopping and baking done; we need to get the decorations up; we need to send out the cards. If we don't get ready for tomorrow, we are going to feel very unprepared when Christmas does finally arrive. And so we plan and prepare. We schedule some time to bake, to visit, to shop. We store up the food and beverage that we want to have over the holiday season. We make travel plans. We try to do everything we can to be ready for that day.

As wonderful as these things may be, they really don't affect the importance of this holy season for us. Yes, they are wonderful additions. I wouldn't want to go through Advent and Christmas without them. Yet, even without these things, Christmas would still be Christmas. If there were no gifts on Christmas morn, it would still be a time to remember and to rejoice in the Gift that God has given to us—the gift of His Son as our Saviour. Take away the tree, and Jesus still came to give His life on the tree of the cross, to take away our sins. If there was no Christmas dinner, we would still have the Bread of Life, who feeds us with His own body and blood, that we may know the power of His death and His resurrection. If we didn't have even one moment to get ready for the celebration of Christmas, it wouldn't change the fact that Jesus Christ came into this world

to die and rise so that sinful people like you and me could have forgiveness and life. Take away the hustle and bustle of Christmas, and God is still there, working for our salvation.

Another day, and God is there. That is true for each and every moment of our lives. No one would deny that there are many things that we face each day that can worry and trouble us. This sin-filled world is a world of uncertainty and doubt. One minute, everything seems to be going well, and then you go to the doctor because you feel an ache or pain, and you find out you have cancer. You feel on top of the world, and plan a wonderful family vacation in Europe—but then, the company is downsizing, and you aren't sure you will have a job next week. A traffic accident could change your life forever. A fire could devastate your family. Fall on the ice one winter's day, and things may never be the same.

We can live to worry about those things, or we can face the day the way God would have us to face each and every day: with the assurance that He is with us to work for the good of His people in all things. We don't have to worry about what tomorrow may bring, because tomorrow is another day, and God is there. He is there in the car as we drive. He is there in the hospital room. He is there at school, or at work, or on our holidays. We can leave all the concern of today, tomorrow and every day into His gracious hands, for as holy Scripture declares: ***“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*** (Joshua 1:9, ESV) Indeed, Jesus has promised us: ***“behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:20, ESV)

It is often hard for us to remember, in the midst of all the uncertainties of this life that there is only one tomorrow that really matters, and that is the tomorrow that our text speaks about, the day when our God will come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead. When He comes, He will take into His eternal glory all those who trust in His gracious promises of life and forgiveness in Christ. All the other tomorrows, or even the thoughts of those tomorrows, mean nothing compared to that day. Of course, we have to go on living until that day, and it is true that only God knows what is going to happen until that day comes. He doesn't tell us when that day will be, or what will happen until then. But He does call us to watch for that day, to take note of the signs. And He assures us: ***“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”***

Only God knows what lies ahead. The psychics and fortune tellers and astrologers don't what will be. They cannot tell us anything that will help us face tomorrow. There are no hidden messages in the stars that will guide you. But until that great day when the Lord comes again in glory, we can face each new day with a hope and confidence that declares: I know not what the day will bring, or whether this will be the day when God calls me home. But this is the day that the Lord has made, and He will be with us through the day, and all our days, until we reach our eternal home of rest, the rest that He has given us through the life, death and glorious resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.