

**Daniel 12:1-3**

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28-B)

**Lessons for the Day: Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-25; Mark 13:1-13****That'll Be the Day!**

November 17, 2024

*“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

Dear friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed;

Sometimes it can be hard to understand the things that happen in our world. We wonder what can possess someone to burst into a crowd of innocent people and just start shooting and killing them for no apparent reason. We hear of children being arrested for the brutal slaying of other children. A mother of two young children pleads with a supposed kidnapper for the safe return of her children, but then is found to have murdered the children herself, creating the illusion of the kidnapper to cover her guilt. Sadly, these things are far from unique. In a world that has so much wonder and beauty, why is there so much evil? We wonder, “When is it going to stop? When is the madness of this world going to come to an end?”

Our text today gives us an answer to that question, although it may not be the answer we actually want. Here our God tells us that a day is coming when the madness of this world will come to an end, and He will deliver His people forever. A day is coming when He will bring judgment to all, including to those who have died. He doesn't tell us when or how it will happen, but He promises that it will be something wonderful: that when it comes, that will be the day that truly marks the first day of the rest of our lives in the glories of God's kingdom.

In our Gospel lesson today Jesus speaks to the disciples of the things that are to come. That leads Peter and James and John and Andrew ask Jesus: *“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”* (Mark 13:4, ESV) That question has been in the minds of many people over the years. John is given his Revelation to provide hope for God's people as we look to coming of the Lord in glory. Many have tried to determine when that day will be. Others become obsessed with the end times. That made Hal Lindsey's book, “The Late, Great Planet Earth” popular in its day. That was followed by the “Left Behind” movies and books. While we are not to be caught up in that fear and hype, God teaches us in His holy Word to be aware of that day, and its importance. Jesus often spoke of the coming of the end, and even gave His people signs of the coming of that day, like those in our Gospel lesson today: *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.”* (Mark 13:8, ESV) Again and again we are encouraged to be prepared and on our guard, as we await the day of the Lord's coming. When that day comes it will be the day when the madness of this world will come to an end. Thankfully, it will also be the day of our salvation.

In these last weeks of the church year, we remember what we confess in the Nicene Creed, that “[Jesus Christ] will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead”. This is as sure and certain as the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Of course, there are those who doubt that this world will ever end. Many people want to believe that this world will keep going forever, evolving into something new along the way, but when we see the madness of our world, we realize that things cannot keep going as they are now. Man would be doomed to destroy himself, regardless of anything else. But whether people want to believe it or not, God does tell us very plainly that He has planned a time when this world will come to an end, although He doesn't tell us when that day will be. I have often said that I would not be surprised, and even expect, that the Lord will return in my lifetime. At the very least, we are always drawing nearer to that great and glorious day of the Lord. The signs are all around us. We see the earthquakes and famines; we see the loveless attitudes that permeate our world. We see parents turning against their children, and brother against brother because of the selfishness that fills their hearts. There are days that I read the paper or listen to the news and wonder if things can get any worse.

And yet, our text suggests that yes, things will get worse, especially for those who trust in God. We are told: *there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time*. Scripture does not tell us this to frighten us, but to make us aware of the devil's evil attacks on our faith. It doesn't take much to see that it is getting harder and harder for God's people in the world today. We are despised by many as being out of touch with the real world. We are persecuted and hated for the faith and truth we profess. In the next few weeks, as our world gets ready for Christmas, we will be again

reminded of how hard it is to speak out for the truth of Christmas as the birth of Christ, when all people want to hear is about Santa and peace and good times. There is no room in the schools for anything Christian, but the false religions of this world are allowed to spread their evil messages to our children. Christians today are not viewed as people of conviction and faith, but as fanatics, as hypocrites, or as ignorant, unknowing people. God alone truly knows what still lies before us in the days ahead.

But while we may not know what is coming, we can be sure of this: when the day of the Lord comes, that will be the day of our salvation. Listen again to what our text says: ***“But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*** When that day comes, everything will change forever. When the day of the Lord finally arrives all the madness of this existence will come to an end. But note that two things happen that day. On the one hand, there are those who will rise to everlasting life; but there are also those who rise to shame and everlasting contempt. God is going to judge all mankind, both the living and the dead. He will punish people for their sin and evil and wickedness. That can seem unsettling to us. After all, shame and everlasting contempt are all that any of us has any right to expect, and are what we truly deserve. As Scripture reminds us: ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*** (Romans 3:23, ESV) Day after day we live as if there were no day of judgment, because we continue to do those things that are wrong in the sight of God, those things that show we seek only to serve ourselves and not the God of our salvation.

Thankfully, God has done something to turn that day into a day of deliverance and life. The writer of Hebrews assures us in our Epistle today that ***“Christ [has] offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins”,*** and that ***“by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”*** (Hebrews 10:12, 14, ESV) By His sacrifice for us on the cross, Christ has set free from the judgment that would condemn us on that great and glorious day of the Lord. Jesus Christ died for sinners like you and me, and He rose so that we might share in His life—the eternal life of joy with Him in the glories of heaven. Through faith in that dying and rising Christ we can look forward to that day, facing it in confidence, because our faith assures us that God has already written our name in His book of life. He has forgiven us our sins and given us new life as His people.

And when that day comes, and God calls us home to His eternal rest, we are going to know life like we have never known it before. Our gracious, loving God will give us life in all its fullness. In heaven, the best, and only the best, will be ours forever. We will never again have to fear tomorrow, or fear pain and illness, death and trouble. We will have the peace that only God can give. We will have the blessing of knowing Him as He knows us. We will experience joy and bliss that we can only dream of in this world. And nothing will be able to take that away from us.

When we look around us and see the madness of this world, we truly long for something better. Praise be to God! The ‘something better’ that we long for is coming. God has a plan that is well under way. His plan, which has been at work since the creation of the world assures us that He can and does deliver all those who trust in Him from the fate that we deserve because of our sin. His plan was being fulfilled when He defeated Satan and the powers of sin and death through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and through the glorious resurrection of the Saviour. In accordance with His plan, the day is surely drawing near when this life will end, and a better life—at least for believers—will begin. Trust in the promises that God has given you in Christ. The day of the Lord is coming soon, and what a wonderful day it will be! Amen.