

Saints Triumphant Sunday

November 15, 2015

**Prayer of the Day:** Almighty God and Savior, you have set the final day and hour when we shall be delivered from this world of sin and death. Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. Alleluia! (Revelation 7:15)

**Sermon Text:** Daniel 12:1-3

His feet sink into the cool, white sand lining the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. With coffee mug in hand, he drinks in the warm beauty of living on the coast. Yet, today feels different. No, this is not some unsure, nervous feeling that something is wrong, but he actually feels the atmosphere pressing down on him. His eyes dart upwards to watch wispy, see-through clouds float in from the sea. His eyes shift back to the roaring scene before him. Just a few days earlier the waves rolled in gently. Today, choppy, 15-foot-high waves crash into each other. They slap at docked boats; they run farther and farther up on shore. A never-ending stiff breeze gusts past him, past his house, and deep inland. The once-calm weather is now changing.

He enters his beach-house, grabs the television remote, and turns on the local news station. A weatherman stands along the same Gulf of Mexico. Waves crash into piers behind him. Winds howl. His hand identifies those wispy, see-through clouds as “cirrus clouds”— a sign of an approaching hurricane. The amount of dropping pressure means that a category-5 hurricane is barreling towards the coast. 200-miles-per-hour winds are expected. Floodwaters will rise. Evacuations have already begun taking place.

So, what do you expect this man to do? The weatherman listed off the signs of the approaching storm. The weather is getting worse. What do you expect him to do? The hurricane has not arrived yet. Will he shrug off the news and get ready for a morning swim? Will he go about his daily routine as if the weather is normal? Will he ignore mentioning the weather with his neighbors? or with his fellow co-workers? or to the people in line at the grocery store? How will he react to an event that has yet to arrive?

**Daniel 12:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. <sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

How do you react to an event that has yet to arrive? After all, Jesus promises you that he is coming soon, but he is not here yet. So, how do you live knowing that he will return? How does knowing this truth affect your daily routine or your conversations or your relationships with others? Knowing what to expect teaches us to: **REMAIN WISE IN THESE LAST DAYS!** *Recognize what has come. Anticipate what is coming. Remember what you have.*

The events surrounding Jesus' return is no secret. I mean, Jesus has made it abundantly clear what to expect. In our gospel reading he says: *Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains... 'Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me'...* ([Mark 13:6-8, 12-13](#)).

Those are the exact same "times of distress" Daniel speaks about. Have those times already reached our lives? You might remember how men like Sun Myung Moon or David Koresh claimed to be Jesus Christ and gathered hundreds of followers. How many times do you hear about tensions between the United States and Russia? How conflicts break out of the Middle East each year? Civil wars in Egypt and Libya have erupted; the kingdom of Syria still fights against Syrians. Nepal's earthquake brought calamity; Japan's tsunami leveled cities. Famines still shrivel up parts of Africa to the point food pours in from countless nations. Even in September's tragic Oregon shooting, the gunman asked students if they believed in God. Those that did were told: "Good. You'll meet your Maker soon." So, have those "times of distress" reached us? Have the things Jesus predicted would come, actually come?

This "time of distress" started the moment Jesus left this earth and entered heaven. That means you and I have been living in these times our whole lives. We have not seen what life is like before these world events. Instead, much of what we daily hear involves wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and false teachers spewing out made-up teachings. That is what you and I are used to hearing. Yet, there are still those gut-wrenching tragedies, those jaw-dropping attacks, those heart-aching disasters that leave many wondering who really controls our world.

When you feel vulnerable to the things raging all around you, take comfort in the fact that your God has not left you. He sends his angels to protect you from physical and spiritual harm. You know, God does not reveal the events leading up to the Last Day so that we can be afraid. Neither does he tell us so that we can hate this world and everything in it. He reveals what is to come so that you and I **REMAIN WISE IN THESE LAST DAYS!** Because we *recognize what has come* and it leads us to *anticipate what is coming*.

God tells you what is coming. **[A]t that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.** Who will be delivered from these "times of distress?" These words are for Daniel to write down. At the moment, Daniel is living in Babylon and not his home-nation of Judah. Yet, "your people" does not refer to the

group of Israelites living in Babylon. You see who is being described in this Bible verse. “Your people” is “everyone whose name is found written in the book.” You are the people that have this promise of deliverance. God has marked you as his dear child in the waters of baptism. The sign made over your head and heart stands as a reminder that when Jesus died on the cross, he died to remove all of your sins. In the Lord’s Supper he gives you his body and blood to assure you that your sins are forgiven, that you are at peace with God, that eternal life is yours.

To bring home this promise to you, Jesus reminds you that your name is written in heaven’s book. That “book” contains the names of those who trust in him as Savior from sin ([Psalm 69:28](#); [Exodus 32:32](#)). No, God does not forget who believes in him and so he must write the name down. Instead, God uses this image to assure you that he has not forgotten about you. In fact, in the reservations for a room in heaven, your name is written down. After all, your God has made a promise to you, and he intends on keeping it. *I am going [to heaven] to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am* ([John 14:2,3](#)).

When those times of distress reach their end, **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake...** All people of all time will awake from the sleep of death. Those who died recently will come out of their graves. Those who died thousands of years ago will rise from the earth. Those lying in unmarked, unknown tombs will come out of them. Those cremated and those buried in caskets will come up. The God who made Adam from the dust of the ground will put together those who returned to dust.

You who have hearts full of faith, hearts trusting that through Jesus alone—not by anything you have done or are trying to do— will rise **to everlasting life**.

**Others to shame and everlasting contempt.** Those who chose to reject the Savior will have their wish for all eternity; they will be forever separated from God’s loving presence. Notice, those who rejected God’s forgiveness will not rise to be forever destroyed; God does not say that here. Those who lived without God will rise to enter hell, a place reserved for the devil and the fallen angels.

The truthful reality is unsettling.. God will raise all people— no one can hide from him, no one is excluded ([John 5:28-29](#)). Those who believe will enter heaven; those who do not will enter hell. So, **REMAIN WISE IN THESE LAST DAYS!** *Recognize what has come. Anticipate what is coming. Also, Remember what you have.*

Because God tells you what you have. **Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens...** You possess wisdom. You are wise enough to know that Jesus Christ makes you ready for eternal life. You know that he will come again and will raise all people from their graves. You know that those who believe in him will never perish, but those who do not believe will be condemned ([Mark 16:16](#); [John 3:16](#)). Not everyone possesses this Godly wisdom. Since you are wise, you are able to bring the light of this saving knowledge to a world filled with uncertainty.

So, **REMAIN WISE IN THESE LAST DAYS!** *Remember what you have. You* have time. Each day Jesus remains in heaven, you have another opportunity to grow close with Jesus. God knows how tempting it is to wander from the truth. Your God gives you 168 hours in a week. He gives you the privilege of using 2- 2½ hours to worship him here. So, is worship

a priority for us or something we do only when nothing else is scheduled? Do we make sure that nothing takes away this one-hour to be with Jesus? Are we really that busy or is something else that pressing that we can put aside this serious Word which gives serious results and prevents a serious outcome?

The devil would love for us to think that we are wise enough to know everything about the Bible that we have no reason to read it anymore. He would love for us to say that we are too busy to worship on Sunday mornings. He would love us to get caught up in worldly things so that we drift away from our God!

Yet, you are wiser than to believe that! Your God takes the time to warn you about what is coming so that you might stand prepared and ready for that Last Day! He shows you his cross, how he has gone to hell and back in order to free you eternally. How easily he could have “forgotten” about us! How easily he could have been “busier with other things!” Yet, Jesus has you in mind and goes to the cross in order to make you righteous!

Because of his saving work, you are wise in putting your time with God as your greatest priority. You are wise in fixing your thoughts and words on the promises he makes you. Just consider the impact your bright, Christian life leaves on others. Consider how you share your faith when you tell a coach that your worship life comes before sports. Consider how you share your faith when you tell your children or your house-guests that you will leave to worship your God— and they are invited to join. Consider how you share your faith when you remind your children why you ever brought them to this house of worship in the first place! Better yet, consider the powerful witness you are giving when you invite someone to hear an eternal message with an eternal outcome! Standing out as these bright shining stars proclaims that life is more than just stuff in this world; life has an eternal outcome.

So, shine like the brightness of heaven; **lead many to righteousness**. Did you catch who is being addressed? “Those who lead many to righteousness” are those same people who are “wise ones.” It is not just pastors. It is not Sunday School teachers only. It is not old Christians only. You are those who lead people to the Word of your God. You are called to be a light for those groping in the unknown spiritual darkness.

After all, when you know future events, you live anticipating what is coming. A man who knows a hurricane is approaching will prepare himself for the storm. He sees the signs. He safeguards his life and possessions. He warns others about what is coming. That is being wise in those final days.

You also know what has come. Jesus makes no secret about it: he is coming soon. The signs in the world are all around you. When you see them, when you live in them, you remain certain that your God will deliver you safely into life eternal. You know that you will not end up in the dust of the earth forever. Your God will open your grave so that you can enjoy the full glory of heaven—body and soul united!

Because you anticipate this Last Day, remain wise in preparing for it. Feed your own faith with God’s precious promises. Strengthen your children’s faith with those same promises. Shine as lights, leading others to the serious, certain promises of God’s Word.

As you look forward to your Lord’s reappearing, **REMAIN WISE IN THESE LAST DAYS!** *Recognize what has come. Anticipate what is coming. Remember what you have.*