

Last Judgment Sunday

November 8, 2015

Prayer of the Day: Lord God Almighty, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit that we may always look forward to the end of this present evil age and to the day of your righteous judgment. Keep us steadfast in true and living faith and present us at last holy and blameless before you; 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! Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. Alleluia! (Matthew 24:42)

Sermon Text: Hebrews 9:24-28

Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Breathless panting fills the air. They scurry behind a tree and wait silently. No speaking, no noise, no sounds whatsoever. They desperately strive to keep everything absolutely silent. Hearts thump. Minds race. Stomachs drop. Hopefully everything will just pass over.

Life was not always like this. Instead, life was joy, was comfort, was peace. Fear did not exist because there was nothing to be fearful of. They had complete freedom as they lived within the boundaries of the law. No guilt weighed heavily on their minds; life was perfect. Then it all came to a crashing end. A serpent, slithering through the branches of a tree. He opens his mouth, hissing that terrible sentence: "Did God really say?" ([Genesis 3:1](#))

Yes, God really did say not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil ([2:15-17](#); [3:2-3](#)). They were free to eat from any other tree in the Garden except for this one—and that was perfect! This was God's command. It was not strict; it was not overbearing. They delighted in obeying God. Then this. Those four slimy words: "Did God really say?" They listened about the supposedly good things that could come from the tree. They thought about how they could be like God. They found the fruit pleasing to the eye. A new life could be unlocked simply by walking outside of God's command. They ate that fruit, openly daring God to punish them for what they had done ([3:4-7](#)).

The minute they eat, eyes are opened. The conscience blares the alarm. They run away, frantically searching for a place in which God might never find them ([3:8](#)). They hide

hoping that God will not hold them accountable for breaking his law. They wait and see if God can simply overlook what they did. They wait and see if God's judgment simply passes over them.

If Adam and Eve run and hide because their disobedience has challenged a perfect God, then what do you expect when your conscience exposes your disobedience? What excuses can be made when you fail to meet God's standard of perfection? What can you say? What can you do? **WHAT JUDGMENT RESTS ON YOU?**

The very thought of judgment is terrifying, is it not? Judgment leaves a nagging feeling of uncertainty. I mean, if you prepare an exhibit for a school science fair, you get nervous; you know you will be judged. You hope that you did not forget to include some crucial information. You hope that you worded all of your research clearly. You hope that the judges appreciate your work. Or if you enter a baking competition, you hope that you baked everything well, that your food is taste worthy, that the judges find no fault with your cooking. When you know judgment is coming, you feel that sense of uncertainty because the final results rest with the judge— and not with you. If you do not meet the judge's standards, then you fail, you lose— and no second chance can ever reverse the judgment.

How much more nerve-wracking to stand before an absolutely perfect God who demands that you be absolutely perfect all the time, just as he is absolutely perfect ([Matthew 5:48](#)). God lays out his expectations and makes them crystal clear. Never ever love anything more than your God ([Matthew 22:37](#)). Not your money, not your family, not your accomplishments. Love God more than anything else. Love everyone as much as you love your own thoughts and your own body ([Matthew 22:39](#)). Always keep in mind how others wish to be treated. Make sure never to gossip, never to ignore the needs of others, never to manipulate someone else for your own advantage. Live like this always and heaven is yours ([Luke 10:28](#)).

So, how do you compare? Have you met those standards? Does God find no fault with your life? Note well, God is concerned about you. His command that you be perfect does not involve pointing fingers at someone who might appear less moral than you. His command does not change by pointing out how your upright actions outweigh your sinful actions. His command that you be perfect does not involve blaming others for your faults. His command means that you are sinless, that you have never failed to meet his demand for a fault-free life.

We gather here on this Sunday known as "Last Judgment Sunday." It reminds us that one day we must all appear before judgment throne of God and hear his just judgment regarding all of our actions ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)). So, **WHAT JUDGMENT RESTS ON YOU?**

Well, the author of our sermon reading tells you: **For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.** Did you catch it? What does Christ do for you? What does he come down from heaven to accomplish? He does not live among us in order to be some new, great, inspirational teacher who tells us good things. He is not just another

good priest/pastor in a long line of priests. No, he is far more superior than that. He can enter heaven itself because he lives the life God demands.

He does not [...] **enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world.** Once every year, the Old Testament high priest made a sacrifice for the sins of all the people ([Leviticus 16](#)). That annual sacrifice had to happen because the people still sinned, because those sacrifices themselves did not have the power to remove sin forever. All the blood of beasts pointed forward to a greater life, a life free from imperfection, a life free from guilt, a life with which God is pleased.

That life has been sacrificed for you on Calvary. Jesus takes up all of your sins. He is crucified once. He sheds his own perfect blood once. God accepts this payment for sin once and for all time. The punishment you and I so rightly deserve has been heaped on Jesus—and he “took up” your sin and “carried it away.” Your sins are cancelled out because Jesus makes the payment owed.

When you feel sin press into you, remember, **[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.** Simply put, the very fact Jesus is conceived, born, suffers, dies, is buried, rises again, and ascends into heaven—it means that he has done everything necessary to make you “not guilty” in the sight of God.

WHAT JUDGMENT RESTS ON YOU? None! Because *Christ is your sacrifice*. Not just that, but *Christ is your salvation*.

“Salvation.” The word means “deliverance.” Christ has delivered you from what your sins deserve. He has delivered you from hell to eternal life.

Consider how that impacts your life. The Hebrews author reminds: **Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...** All people will die; death is inevitable. This verse states that truth; cemeteries repeat it. There is no second chance, no do-over in life. Still, many try to avoid talking about death; many try to ignore the issue of God’s judgment. Instead of finding rest in God’s forgiveness, many simply remove any need for forgiveness. You might hear people say: “*God doesn’t send anyone to hell!*” Others try to deny the mere existence of God. They say: “*If God doesn’t exist, then it doesn’t matter what I do. I’m accountable to no one!*” You see, instead of going to God’s Word and trusting that **Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people**, more effort is placed into denying the only deliverance from hell.

You, you are different. You know **Christ was sacrificed once to take away [your] sins.** If you ever wonder if God cares for you, look no further than the cross. The very fact that Jesus suffers and dies is evidence that he cares for you. So, when you confess (as you do) in the Apostle’s Creed or Nicene Creed: “*I believe... that [Jesus] will come to the judge the living and the dead...*” judgment does not worry you. You know you will approach the judgment throne of God. You already know what you will hear. The same thing Jesus told you on Easter Sunday: “*You are forgiven! Your debts are cancelled! Your sins are removed as far as the east is from the west! You are a child of God!*”

Even as you walk towards death's doors, you remain confident of this truth. Yes, the devil will strive to have you forget about what Jesus accomplishes for you. You might feel that uncertainty flare up again because you do not want to be on the wrong side of eternity. Yet, fear not! Jesus **was sacrificed once to take away [your] sins!**

As you continue living in this world, remember how God sees you now. God is on your side. Your Jesus enters heaven for you— for your benefit! He stands in the presence of his heavenly Father as your Friend. As God looks at you, he looks at you through Jesus; he sees the perfect life of Jesus rest on you!

See what you receive. ... **and [Christ] will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.** It is no secret: one day this world will come to an end. God has not revealed the exact year, month, day, minute he will return. Jesus will not rip open the heavens and descend in order to die on the cross again. He will come down so that he can take you to be with him. He will make your salvation a reality. The eternal life you know is already yours will soon be yours in its fullest form as he brings you into heaven itself.

Because of Jesus, you do not need to fear God's judgment. Adam and Eve cowered in fear in the presence of a perfect God. How could they live? God is perfect; they are not. God demands perfection; they chose to live imperfect. How could God be content with their life? Because God would send his only Son to endure their judgment, your judgment for sin, my judgment for sin.

He has. Jesus is your sacrifice for sin. He has given his life for your benefit. You do not need to worry that God hates you or that God is going to punish you for all the bad things you have done. You have no more worries because Jesus has suffered, he has died, he has risen again—and he has done all this for you!

Eagerly await that Last Day. Yes, Jesus is coming soon. Yes, he will gather all people before his judgment throne. Yet, there is no fear. You are not expected to walk before God alone. Jesus covers over all your past deeds, your wrongs, your embarrassments. God remembers your sins no more. No, not that he forgets them. Not that he pretends they never happened. He does not hold you accountable for the punishment you deserve because Jesus has already been held accountable for your sins. Jesus has taken up and carried away your sins.

WHAT JUDGMENT RESTS ON YOU? None! Because *Christ is your sacrifice. Christ is your salvation.*