

## Jesu Juba

“Worried About Judgment Day?”

Text: Luke 19:11-28

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we enter the last few weeks of the Church Year, the attention and focus of our readings and hymns is on the time when Jesus will come again and this created world and order will end. Or in other words: Judgment Day.

Now I will admit, this is not a particularly popular topic – not because people don’t want to think about it, but because in the minds of most people, it is simply *irrelevant*. When you mention Judgment Day, people’s eyes tend to glass over, and they think of the strange looking guy with long hair carrying the sign “The end of the world is near!” Either that or they think of the deluded folks who have sold all their possessions, dressed in white robes, and gone up on the top of some mountain. Judgment Day, in the minds of many, is for wackos! Or for cults.

And so unless you’re one of those folks with signs or white robes or some other similarly strange behaviour, *who cares?* If there is going to be a Judgment Day, and the world is going to end – a claim many would debate anyhow – even if it was going to happen, most people think its not coming soon. It’s not going to happen in my lifetime, and there’s so much else going on to worry about. *Real* stuff. Real life. Like, is my son or daughter coming home from Iraq? How about the economy: will I get a job before they foreclose on my home? What about stem cell research? There was the election and the direction our country is going in. There are doctor’s appointments, tests in school, family problems, aging parents, job issues, obligations – who’s got time to worry about Judgment Day? It’s just not a factor in people’s everyday lives.

So what’s a Church to do? What’s a Church to say to a world with such thoughts about Judgment Day?

Well, I think this: I think the world’s got it exactly right this time! I agree with them! For most of the time I don’t think about Judgment Day! Do you? Life is hard enough and busy enough without something else to worry about. Home and family, Church, work – Judgment Day for me, on most days, isn’t on the radar. It is well down on my list of priorities. And, I think, for you too. And so I don’t think we do the world any good by forcing Judgment Day down their throats! . . . But – and this is an important but – while I think the world is right in not worrying about Judgment Day, I think they are right for the wrong reason! We don’t have to worry about Judgment Day – not because it’s not important, or because it’s not coming – but because it’s already been taken care of for us.

As a Christian, I don't have to worry about Judgment Day because Christ worried about it for me, and took care of it for me, and I already know how it's going to turn out.

You see, that is why Jesus told the parable that we heard today in the Holy Gospel. He was near Jerusalem, and some of His followers thought ***“that the Kingdom of God was to appear immediately.”*** Those were the long-haired, sign-carrying, white robed, mountain top folks! They had 'em then, too! But Jesus told this parable to counteract that wrong understanding of the Kingdom of God and Judgment Day. And He said, basically, that while you're waiting for the King to return, don't just stand around! Get to work. Do business. Live. Take the money, talents, abilities, and whatever else the King has given to you (all the minas!), and use them. Invest it for Him. And have satisfaction in what you do. (That's important to the King too!) Whatever place in life, whatever relationships, whatever talents the King has given to you, use them, to the best of your ability. And that's not just His wish, it's His command. He put you and gave to you for a reason. So whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, worker, friend, neighbor, student, rich, poor, low, high, young, old, retired, educated, or uneducated – wherever you are, whoever you are, whatever you have been given, invest yourself. Serve one another. Live, and enjoy your life! Be busy. The servants in the parable who had received from the King didn't know when He was returning, and neither do we. So we are not to worry about it. Do what you have been given to do, and the King will take care of the rest.

You see, that's the good thing about having a King – He takes care of the Kingdom and the kingly things; the *really big* things. And we get to live in His Kingdom. We get to live in the freedom and peace of the Kingdom of the King, and are blessed and happy to do so. And so whenever the King returns is fine with us! Whether it's soon or a long time from now, really doesn't matter. We're busy doing what we have been given to do. Living our vocations, serving our neighbor, enjoying the life and work our King has graciously provided for us. And when He returns, He'll have *even more* to give us – great, kingly things (like cities!). Not because our work or efforts have earned Him so much (for what's another five or ten minas to a King?), but simply because a generous King gives generously. A gracious King gives graciously. A lavish King gives lavishly. Because that's who He is. Because nothing makes Him happier!

But in the midst of all that good stuff, in this parable not everyone lives “happily ever after.” There are those who do not want this King to be their King and, it seems, they are very vocal about it! Perhaps it was this group that influenced that one servant to have a negative opinion of the King, and so not do what had been given to him to do, but to hide the mina, in fear. But hiding the mina is not really what bothered the King – it was the false witness about Him. It was the evil words that reported this good King to be a bad king, this generous King to be a stingy king, this gracious King to be a wicked king. It was the fact that this servant believed the false report, and so lived in fear of the King's return. . . . Well, in the end, those who did not want Him to be their King will get what

they wanted. To those who think Him a harsh King, He will be what they think. The consequences will be severe. It will be a Judgment Day to fear.

Now that's how the parable ends . . . but that's not the end of the story. There's one more verse that we heard, one more sentence that shows us precisely why we know our King is a good King. It is the verse that makes this whole parable make sense: "***And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.***" Or in other words, Jesus now goes to Jerusalem to make this parable come true.

For contrary to what some thought, Jesus' entry into the capital city of Jerusalem did not mean that the Kingdom was now going to immediately appear. Rather, with these words, Jesus, as the King in this parable, is entering Jerusalem to now depart to receive the Kingdom. A departure that would take place by means of the cross. For as He enters Jerusalem, there are those who do want Him to be their King, and they are vocal about it. They see to it that He is arrested, tried, convicted, crucified, and killed exactly because He is the King – the King of the Jews. This is the very charge that is placed above Him as they enthrone Him on a cross and swear allegiance to another King, crying out "***We have no king but Caesar.***"

But as in the parable, those who did not want Him as King could not stop Him from becoming King! The cross, it turns out, was part of the plan. It had been since the very beginning. And so after His death and burial, Jesus completes His departure as He goes to that distant country – arising from death, ascending into Heaven, and being seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He receives the Kingdom that He has shed His blood and given His life for. All authority in Heaven and earth is given to Him. There is a wonderful coronation in Heaven as Jesus, the victor over sin, death, and devil, takes His throne! His triumph is complete. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Now we are awaiting His return. He is coming back, as He promised. Those who reject Him He will reject. But those who by faith are His, will receive the great, kingly rewards He comes to bring. "*To live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.*" (Small Catechism, Explanation of Second Article)

And those great, kingly rewards is what awaits us on Judgment Day. For in reality, Judgment Day has already taken place for you and me. It took place when Jesus hung on the cross. When our guilty verdict was pronounced upon Him. When our death was suffered by Him. When the punishment for our sin and rebellion was poured out upon Him. All the judgment of God against our sin took place on that one day, in that one place, on that one man. Your King took it in your place, as your substitute, to set you free. And you are free. So it is done! . . . And that verdict of freedom is what you hear here every week. For every week, as we gather here in this place, we have a small dress rehearsal for the Day when the King will come again, visibly, for all to see. Every week, a little Judgment Day, as the King comes to us and tells us His judgment. As He comes

and says, *“I forgive you all your sins.”* You are not guilty. He gives us His Word. He gives us His Body and Blood. He seals His Spirit in us as a guarantee. And He does so because He wants you to know what will happen on that day! To know even now. That as you await His return you might live not in fear or worry about that day, but in confidence and good courage. (2 Cor 5:5-6) That you would be free to live and enjoy the life He has graciously given to you.

And so if you are not worried about Judgment Day, if you don't give it much thought, if you are too busy living for the King in His Kingdom, then you've got it exactly right! For that is the life of faith: leaving the kingly things to the King, and doing what we have now been given to do. That is the life of faith. Faith that has received all from the King, but which also knows that the best is still to come. Faith that knows we have nothing to fear, whenever the King returns. For when He returns, we know what He will say. ***“Well done, good servant.”*** Come and receive the Kingdom that I have been prepared *for you!*

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.