

Jesu Juva

“Flee to Christ”

Text: Matthew 24:15-28; Exodus 32:1-20

When Luther taught the book of Genesis to his students at the University of Wittenberg, he spent some time imagining what this world would have been like without sin. Animals living at peace with one another and with humans. For people, no sickness or death, no weakness or bodies wearing out and falling apart. In our world, no drought or famine, no hunger or want, no stealing, wars, jealousy, or terrorism. No divorce, no child abuse, no children disrespecting their parents, no hatred, prejudice, lying, or taking advantage of one another. No false gods or false religions. Or in other words, truly paradise in every way.

Which is quite a contrast to what we heard in the readings this evening. The golden calf, the abomination of desolation, fleeing to the mountains, running and not turning back, great tribulation, false Christs and false prophets, corpses and vultures. Chaos. God's perfect and orderly creation disordered and plunged into sin. And put side-by-side like that - the original and how it is now - you can begin to realize just how devastating sin really is. The havoc that it has wreaked, even if we don't always realize it, since we've lived in this boiling pot so long and no longer see it or feel it - in the world or in us.

And so this world is going to end. Just as Jerusalem and the Temple came to an end at the appointed time and Israel had to flee (as we heard), so too is this world going to end because of sin. And it's not a pretty picture.

So, should we flee too? Flee to the mountains or become doomsday preppers? Some are doing that very thing.

But no. For when this world ends with Jesus' coming again, there will be no place to run to or hide. His coming will be ***like the lightning that comes from the east and shines as far as the west***. Everyone is going to know. You won't need anyone to say ***'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!'*** If you need someone to tell you, you can be sure that's a false Christ and a false prophet. You're going to know it when Jesus comes. Everyone is going to know.

And things are going to be difficult before then. There will be ongoing persecution and tribulation for Christians. We see it happening, the latest with the executions in the Middle East, pastors being defrocked for not going along with the world's agenda, Christian student groups being barred from college campuses, and more. But Jesus said it would be so. That if they hated Him, they're going to hate those who belong to Him, too (John 17).

But Jesus doesn't tell us all this to scare you - actually, just the opposite. He is telling us this beforehand *to comfort us*. So that when these things happen we will not be surprised and think things are spinning out of control. Our Lord knows *exactly* what is going to happen and is therefore able to protect us in it and save us from it. And so Jesus speaks reassuring words here too. That the time of this evil will ***be cut short*** for your sake. That ***the elect***, God's children, will not be deceived or led astray. That is not possible. So Jesus lets us know that we be not unprepared.

And Jesus tells us this so that in the midst of the sin and chaos and whatever comes your way, you look to Him for all that you need. For protection and forgiveness and hope. For protection from the evil one and his schemes and temptations, for forgiveness for your sin, and for the hope of life both now and forever. And that's why Jesus came - to not only speak those things, but to do it. To conquer sin, satan, and death through His own death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, and then baptize you into that victory. So that if you're going to flee **you flee to Him** and look to Him and His cross for all that you need.

And so flee to Him where He has promised to be - He and the power of His cross in the waters of Baptism, in His Word, in His Supper. For there He is for you with the help, comfort, and strength you need. There He is for you as your *true* God, giving what the golden calf never could. For all the golden calf could give the people was a stomach ache after Moses threw the word and law of God against it, ground it up, put it in the water, and made the people drink it. But after the word and law of God was thrown against Jesus on the cross and He was ground up (so to speak) for our sin, He was put in the water of Baptism to wash us clean, and His Blood then given us to drink in His Supper. Israel had to drink their god in punishment, but Jesus drank the cup of God's punishment and wrath against sin *so we wouldn't have to*. That instead, we now drink His cup filled with life and grace and blessing.

So that whenever and however the end comes, whether it be sooner or later, we be ready and safe. *In Him*. For He is our hiding place, our refuge, and our fortress. The only one who can protect us and save us.

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