

10 December 2025  
Advent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“Judgment of the Forgiven”  
Text: Romans 5:1-11; Matthew 25:21-46

In the Name of (+) Jesus. Amen.

Judgement Day! What’s it going to be like?

A pastor friend of mine once told me he has a file for every member of his congregation, so when Jesus comes again, he will be able to say how he cared for each and every one. *Is that what it’s going to be like?* Like an inquisition? I’m not sure I can do that . . .

Then a while back, my sister also sent me a story she saw on the internet about Judgment Day - you probably know how it goes. You’ve probably heard a similar thing . . . There’s the eternal courtroom . . . God is the Judge, the devil is the prosecutor, and Jesus is your defense attorney. And you’re on trial. The devil then goes through every sin you’ve ever committed - *every one* of your sinful thoughts and words and deeds and desires! Then ones you knew and the ones you didn’t. The ones you remember and the ones you’ve forgotten. He goes through them all - all the reasons you should be condemned. And he’s right, of course. . . . But when he’s done, Jesus stands up and says: *But I died for all those sins. This one is mine.* . . . Then the Judge says *not guilty*, and in you go.

I’m not sure I want that. No, I’m sure I don’t! I don’t want all my sins dredged up and rehearsed for me! And who else will be there? Who else gets to hear? EGADS! *Is that what it’s going to be like?*

Well, let’s think about this a little tonight . . .

First, I would point you to the Psalm we sang. It said: ***as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*** Do you know how far that is? Some of you have heard me talk about this before, but I think it’s worth repeating, and especially as we think about the Last Day and judgment. How far is the east from the west? Well, to think about that, think about why God said ***as far as the east is from the west*** and not *as far as the north is from the south*. Do you know why? **Because north and south meet.** Imagine you’re flying around the globe, up toward the north pole . . . There is a point where you stop flying north and start

flying south. There's a point they meet. But *now* imagine you're flying around the equator . . . There is never a time you stop flying east and start flying west. **East and west never meet** like north and south do. Now the important part of that is: **what does that mean for your sins?** If they are separated from you as far as the east is from the west . . . are they coming back to haunt you on the Last Day?

And then there is the Catechism we reviewed. In those words we said that *we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven* - not just here on earth - but **before God in heaven**. And then there was also this: *that when the called ministers of Christ . . . absolve those who repent of their sins . . . this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself*. And then there was this *promise*, too: *If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven*. They are gone. Even on the Last Day.

And then we heard the Scripture from Matthew - about when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and how Judgement Day is going to go . . . you've heard that Scripture before. But ask yourself this: *were the sins of the sheep brought up?* They weren't, were they? And what were the sheep called? ***You who are blessed by my Father***. And all that was mentioned were the good deeds they did, *which they even didn't even realize!*

So Psalm, Catechism, Scripture . . . these all together are saying that when you hear the words of absolution every Sunday - *I forgive you all your sins* - **you can be sure they are!** The verdict you hear every Sunday is the same one you will hear on the Last Day. Or maybe better to say, God doesn't want you to wait and wonder what that verdict on the Last Day will be - **so He has it spoken to you now**. You are not guilty. You are forgiven. And you can take God at His Word.

And this (among other things) is what separates Christians from people of other religions, like Muslims. They can do *everything* God tells them to do, *perfectly*, and they still don't know and can't be sure that God will be merciful to them in the end. They just have to hope.

But not us! Your sins are gone. Atoned for. Remitted. Forgiven. They're not coming back. If you can't make east and west meet, if you can't put Jesus back in the tomb, then your sins aren't coming back either. Not now, not ever. You don't have to fear Judgment Day *because of Jesus*.

Which is what Paul was telling the Romans in that Scripture we also heard tonight. ***We have been justified by faith . . . we have been justified by His blood . . . we have been reconciled through our Lord Jesus Christ***. That's all been done and

given to you. Gifts of God, received by grace through faith. Through the Word spoken and proclaimed to us, the water poured on us, and the Supper fed to us. Gifts to give us life and confidence and a sure and certain hope.

So based on all that . . . that story I mentioned earlier . . . here's how it *really* goes . . .

There's the same set up . . . the eternal courtroom . . . God is the Judge, the devil is the prosecutor, and Jesus is your defense attorney. And you're on trial. The devil gets out your book, your record book with all your sins. And I know you - it's a BIG one! And he smugly smiles and opens it up, all ready to accuse you . . . every sin you've ever committed - every sinful thought and word and deed and desire! The ones you knew and the ones you didn't. The ones you remember and the ones you've forgotten. He's ready to go through them all - all the reasons you should be condemned. But instead of a presentation of all your sins, there is . . . *silence*. Well, *not exactly*. You can hear the pages turning, flipping, one after the other. And now the Judge is waiting, losing patience. *Well Mr. Devil, what have you got?* They . . . they were here before! All his sins! I know they were! But now, all there is . . . *are blood stains*. And now it's Jesus' turn to smile. And with nothing to accuse you with, *you are free*.

You see, **Judgment Day already happened for you**. On the cross. And that blood wiped out all your sins. So on the Last Day, you have *nothing* to fear. Go *in peace*.

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