

Dear daughters of Jerusalem, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

It's the end of the world, the complete and total destruction of this world, the end of the church year....
but wait, that's not what the readings this morning say. Where's the readings from Revelation and
Daniel and all the apocalyptic stuff we so often hear talked about?

The things we speak of in regards to the end of the world, especially as we end the church year, are
often misused and misguided. The end is not as much about the destruction of the world as it is about
the second coming of Christ. This world that we live in certainly will be destroyed and there will certainly
be a new heaven and a new earth in which we will be brought into.

"But what's so wrong with this one? Sure there is political corruption, and the weather can be a bother,
and sure my friends and relatives get sick and some of them even have died, and yes, money can be a
bother, but all in all it's not so bad," some would say. Some would even go so far as to say things would
be a lot better if we just let people be and the church didn't try and interfere and inform people on how
to live their lives. Or as some prominent authors have put it, if there wasn't this issue of religious beliefs
and faith, a vast majority of the wars and violence that has occurred would be less. And of course, there
is the thought that there will be no real end to this world, maybe it's just some fascination to continue
on religious beliefs and systems.

All these things ignore the reality that this world, our bodies, were not made to break down and die.
People were not created to be a people looking out only for number 1, pushing our own agendas, and
certainly not to use violent means to do so. That we have these breakdowns, these issues in our society
have their root squarely in the reality that is sin. It is the reality of sin that there is death and that the
earth is spiraling towards its end.

But Pastor, I am a good person, I am here every Sunday, I filled Thanksgiving boxes for the needy
yesterday and gave coats away for those to keep warm, surely your not talking about me? Really, you
want to go there... what about those times where you don't meditate or receive God's Word with joy, or
those little white lies, or those words of gossip and hurt towards fellow Christians and even within your
own family. You are a sinner, I am too, by nature sinful and unclean.

"And behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never
bore and the breasts that never nursed!'" Well in our society there certain are those that think these
women would be blessed. But recognizing children for what they are, gifts of God, the one who alone
creates and gives life, the idea that one who does not receive the gifts of God in children would have
never been cause for one to be called blessed. As we heard last week, end times living was never
promised to be easy living for the Christians. In fact, as things go, these women will be called blessed
and things will get to the point where they will begin to say to the mountains, 'fall on us' and to the hills
'cover us.' This is what we have coming to us. Weep for yourselves and your children.

This doesn't sound like the Thanksgiving mood or the so-called holiday spirit that many like to portray. As we see Jesus being beaten and crucified, he proclaims precisely why he came, "Father forgive them." And the people did precisely what we can find ourselves doing at times and what many in the world still do. Stand by, watching, scoffing, and mocking. "Let him save himself," they cried. If this Jesus really is who he says he is, the promised King of the Jews, the Messiah, the one who healed others, the one who raised others from the dead, then he can save himself. If Jesus really is so loving, then why didn't he do something about that unexpected death, why are there these economic troubles and real physical needs, why are there these tragedies. And what the evildoers that not only prosper but they put God to the test and seemingly escape (Malachi 3:15). Or at least the mocking and railing goes from many against the church and Christ, or the railing from the one who hung upon the cross, "are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

As the other criminal confesses, they are hanging there justly, they deserved it, just as we deserve death and hell for being the sinners that we are.

Fellow redeemed, this man is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of God in the flesh. We sinners justly deserve temporal and eternal punishment. This man has done nothing wrong. For you, dear sinner, he suffered innocent suffering and death. Rejoice and be glad, the kingdom of God is at hand, blessed are you, dear saint.

Jesus' death is for you, he takes your punishment of death and hell upon himself and delivers to you the forgiveness of sins, and promises to you the same promise that he gives to the thief on the cross, today you will be with him paradise. This is what he gives to you as he proclaims his absolution to you, you are forgiven. This is what he delivers to you in baptism and he makes you his treasured possession and spares you.

This is indeed the end, it is the end of sins reign. The end came in Jesus' death for you. Death has no power, risen from the grave he gives you his life. Ascended at God's right hand, he will come again to judge both the living and the dead. But you have no reason to fear, sin, death, and the devil have no dominion over you. You are forgiven, you are righteousness, you are given the very body and blood which hung from the tree that delivers you forgiveness and life. You will be brought with him into paradise.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.