

Jesus is coming again!

Though we do not have an announced date for the Last Day, God in His Word has given us enough signs of its coming for us to know that it indeed is drawing near. Jesus tells us that in the days before His coming most people will behave just as they did before the coming of the flood in the days of Noah; that is, they will be busy with business, with enjoying themselves, with family and friends, giving no thought to the end of all things and the coming judgment, (Matthew 24:37-39). They will have their god: self and self-interest. In the midst of all their self-indulgence there will be what there always is when people live only for self: strife and wars, confusion in society and culture, betrayal of friends and family, and not least, opposition to and hatred of the Gospel; there will be heresy even where the Gospel is still heard (Mark 13:22; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 2:18). Yes, some of the most horrible errors will appear inside of the church itself with the persistence of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) in leading people away from trust in Christ to trust in his own deceiving wonders and invented doctrines.

To be sure, most of these things have been happening and that to an ever-greater degree since the days of Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, as they happen in our day they serve as a reminder that we will never have a heaven on earth as we know it now; they warn us against the folly of imagining that somehow the church can transform the world into an earthly paradise. Yes, and they warn us that the very effort is akin to the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), which also brought down the wrath of God on people who thought they could do without Him.

There is, however, one promise of Christ about the timing of the end of the world that is all but unique to our time. Jesus said, ¹⁴ *“This Good News of the kingdom will also be preached in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come...”* ³⁴ *“Truly, I tell you, that this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things happen.”* ³⁵ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will certainly not pass away,”* (Matthew 24:14, 34-35).

Jesus gives the assurance that even in the worst of times His Gospel and the Church will endure. However, the especially telling feature of the promise is that He will not return until that Word has been proclaimed in all the world. That promise has largely been fulfilled in our age; it would be difficult to find places on earth where the message has not penetrated at one time or another and to one degree or another. Then He adds that significant remark that the generation to which He addressed these words would not end until He returned. In Jesus’ way of looking at time, there are but two generations: the generation of promise before His birth and the generation of fulfillment that ends with His coming again.

So, what then is left to happen before all of His promises to this generation have been fulfilled? Nothing! It is for us as Jesus said: Watch! You do not know the day or the hour. Neither is it your business to know it. Your business is to be ready when He comes, be that in the hour of death or on the day of His second coming - the day of resurrection and judgment. That watching consists of a faithful hearing of His Word. It is a life of repentance that laments sin. It is a life that rejoices to hear the Saviour’s voice in the Gospel of redemption and forgiveness. It is a life that as a result of the love of God, of His immeasurable grace and mercy in Christ, strives to live a life that loves God and His Word and serves our neighbour. It is a life that shuns, therefore, all that is contrary to that Word and lives to receive again and again the blood-bought grace and forgiveness of the Redeemer. Such a one can always pray with St. John the last words of the Bible, from our Second Reading for today, *“Come, Lord Jesus!”* (Rev. 22:20).

We look and long for His coming. For then it will finally all come together, and Jesus will be seen for what He has always been: All in all! Then finally we will sing and say - and actually and fully mean it: *“Behold, He has done all things well!”* Then we will see Jesus! He found us naked and

clothed us with His own righteousness. He found us dead and breathed life and life eternal into us. He saw us starving and fed us with Himself. He came to us mortally wounded and poured healing salve into all our wounds. He looked on us weeping and in despair and that through our own fault and then spoke to us powerful words of comfort. He did it all. He did it all by His work and by His Word. Eternity will indeed have to last forever to give us sufficient time to thank and praise Him for it all!