

Advent II
 December 6, 2009
 Mal. 4:1-6; Rm. 15:4-13; Lk. 21:25-36

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

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

If you have ever lived in Mexico you have learned about the, “Mexican Mañana.” The English word *tomorrow* is translated into Spanish as, *mañana*. In Mexico, *mañana* can mean literally, tomorrow, but it also means an indefinite period of time in the future. This is often frustrating for visitors who don't understand this cultural difference. The plumber, who says he will fix your toilet *mañana*, might come tomorrow, but he might come in 3 weeks. What may seem disingenuous to our cultural ears is actually not the case in Mexico. In stead of hearing bad news from the plumber that depending on his priorities he might not come in 24 hours - the word *mañana* gives you hope that he could come sometime soon.

The advent of Christ to judge both the living and the dead is somewhat like the Mexican Mañana. We know that Christ will come soon, but not necessarily in the way that we understand the word soon. As is written, God is not slow in keeping His promises, as some understand slowness, but He is patient with this unbelieving generation wanting all to repent.

The Father knows the exact hour that the Son of Man will return, but we don't, and neither does the Mayan calendar that ends at 2012. For those longing for Christ's return and for those who are prepared for Christ's return, the promise that He could return at any future moment, like today or *mañana*, gives hope. Yet, if you live like Christ won't come back today or tomorrow you should watch out lest that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. If we believe that we will have time to repent or be faithful to Scripture tomorrow, in 3 weeks, or sometime before 2012 – we are not prepared. If we think that we can delight in this pet sin of ours today and repent tomorrow – we are not ready. Do be deceived brothers and sisters – it matters what you do today. If you think it doesn't matter that you continue in deliberate sin – you are not ready. We confessed today I John 1:8-9. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” This is no cotton candy idea of sin. This isn't the confession of liberals who confess, “Yes, we are all sinners, but it is Ok to live a gay lifestyle or whatever.” You are NOT Ok if you think as long as you confess in some generic and abstract manner that you are sinner, yet keep on living in a particular willful sin. If this describes you, then you are deceived and the truth is not in you.

Wake up! It matters if you continue destroying people's reputations by gossiping. It matters if you despising preaching and the Word of God by thinking you can make church a priority after you finish college or retire from work. It matters if you habitually lie to your parents and don't honor and obey them. It matters if you keep surfing the internet late at night lusting after what God forbids, be it women or wealth. It matters if you don't love and cherish your spouse. It matters if you live a Scrooge of life only concerned for yourself and not your neighbor, Tiny Tim. If you are continuing to live in sin, like living with someone you aren't married to, and think that God will turn a blind eye – you are not prepared for Judgment Day. If you think it is Ok to mock Christ by holding onto whatever sin it might be for whatever justifications you come up with, you are not prepared and are denying the many warnings from Holy God.

So, wake up! Stay awake at all times like Holy God warns you, time and time again. **“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.** Be ready, right now. The Son of Man could come on a cloud in glory at anytime for the entire world to see. Stay awake at all times - virgins have oil in your lamps because the bridegroom is coming - open your eyes people and see the signs. The fig tree is sprouting leaves, so consider yourself forewarned and without excuse that the kingdom of God is near.

Christ could advent *mañana*, and when He does heaven and earth will pass away. All of our possessions - our new church building and the like – will pass away. All of our earthly cares won't matter. It won't matter that you thought it better to keep the peace instead of confess the truth. We say that we believe and teach the Bible alone. We say we are confessionals. Is this most certainly true of us? Martin Luther said, “If I profess

with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefields besides is more flight and disgrace if it flinches at that point.”¹

So stop talking. Stop trying to justify your sin. Christ will tolerate no such account on the Last Day. He will note care that 95% of people were living in the same sin you were. He will not be sympathetic to some misunderstanding of the words *love* and *tolerance*. He will not tolerate excuses for unfaithfulness to His Word.

Repent. Repent of living like the pop country song that says, “Everybody want to go to heaven, but nobody want to go now.” Pray and ask that you may have strength to escape all these things. There will always be pressure to focus on the things of this world that are passing away and put the words of Christ on the back burner. So, stay awake at all times. If you have yawned at and slept through God’s warnings, then stay asleep because the Gospel isn’t for you. However, if you are rightly terrified that you haven’t stayed awake as you should, then remain awake and keep on listening.

Christ’s first advent has made us ready to stand before Him on the Last Day. We are ready for today and mañana because Christ came for Scrooges like us. By nature we all are *Chief of Scrooges*. Yet, Jesus came for the whole world, Scrooges in Mexico and America included. He came and did what God demands we do, but don’t do. Jesus lived a sinless life, keeping all of the 10 Commandments in our place. He always honored his parents, always loved His neighbor, and always loved God with His whole heart. Where our faith fails and we live like God’s Word doesn’t matter, Christ always held it sacred. And Christ came to do more than keep the Law for you. He came to die for your breaking It. All of your sins as parents and children were placed on the sinless Lamb. All of your sins in marriage and all the sins that you commit in your other vocations were placed on Jesus. All of the gossip and hurtful words we have spoken rang in the ears of Christ as He went to die for them as His own sinful words. All of our sexual sins and lustful thoughts were placed on innocent Jesus. All of the times that you have fallen down and sinned, Christ picked up those sins and placed them on Himself. Yes, Christ came to die for the sins that you committed in your past, the ones today, and the ones mañana. Christ’s work is done. He lived, died, and rose for you. Christ tells you with 100% certainty that your sins are forgiven - all of them! There isn’t one thing you have done that Jesus didn’t come and carry away forever. Since you are declared righteous and forgiven for Jesus’ sake, doesn’t that make you excited and hopeful to see Him on the Last Day?

It gives us great hop that Christ might come mañana because it is He who keeps us awake and prepared. How does He do this? He has given us the Holy Spirit. *The Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified and kept us in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.*²

Heaven and earth

will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ... raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. The same words that cover you in baptism, enter your ears through preaching and absolution, and are placed into your mouths in Holy Communion won’t pass away. It is the eternal Word that keeps you prepared for the Last Day. It is the Word alone that keeps you awake and ready. This means that on the Last Day you will be found awake and prepared because Jesus speaks to you often keeping you repenting and believing until mañana. Amen.

¹ Preus, “Luther: Word, Doctrine and Confession,” 197.

² Luther, “Small Catechism,” Explanation to the 3rd Article of The Creed.