

St. Paul's Anglican Church
25th Sun after Trinity, Matt 24:23-31
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Why do we need a Savior? And, if God desires every one of his created beings to spend eternity with Him in heaven, why must our Savior also need to bring condemning judgment into the world? The simple answer is that Adam and Eve, enticed by Satan's claim that they could be as God by eating the forbidden fruit, disobeyed their Creator because of their envy and pride. They wanted to be like God, almost making themselves their own god by putting their desires above his instructions. And Jealousy and pride led their first son, Cain, to kill his brother Abel, because God favored Abel's offering over his own.

As you well know, clergy seldom are content giving short answers, so, starting with Isaiah, we will examine our readings for further insight into these questions. The Book begins with Isaiah's prophecy of the coming judgment against Jerusalem and all of Judah, and our reading (Isa 2:6-19) gives specific reasons why judgment or punishment was necessary.

Though they have been blessed and **Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures, Their land is also filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.** Adam and Eve desired to be like God, centuries later, God's people in Judah went further astray by actually making and worshiping their own gods; they abandoned their Creator.

They were filled with foolish pride, consequently, Isaiah prophesied about the day when **the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted. And the idols shall utterly pass away.** Proudful looks and pride itself shall be punished; those with false pride will be humbled, and everything that we give more importance to than God, (our own little idols)

will be taken away. We, like ancient Israel, need a Savior because we have sinned against God.

About 700 years after Isaiah, the Son of God came into the world and the relationship between God and his created beings was forever changed. St. John refers to this change in the epistle (1John 3:1-8) when he said, **Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.** God's love for us is so great that He provided a means for us to become purified from our sins and to be made his children.

John said, **Sin is the transgression of the law**, so, every time we break any of God's laws, we commit sin. But those who have faith in his Son will be purified because **he was manifested**, or his purpose is, **to take away our sins**. This does not mean that we can be perfect in this life, it means we need a Savior so that our sins can be removed enabling us to enter the next life triumphantly and confidently.

John also said, **let no man deceive you; he that does righteousness is righteous, as he (Jesus) is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning.** Jesus is righteous and can only do what is right, conversely, even before the time of Adam and Eve, Satan is evil and can only do what is evil.

John is not saying that if we commit one sin, we are of the devil, or belong to Satan, any more than doing one thing right makes us children of God. According to John, **the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.** Jesus overcome Satan, and through our faith in Him, our sincerely confessed sins are forgiven. We need a Savior so that we can overcome the temptations of Satan in order to live, not a perfect life, but a righteous life. God's love for us is real, and it has tangible, everlasting benefits, so in return, as much is humanly possible, we should devote our lives to pure and right living.

God's love is real, and so is his judgment that will come in the last days when our Savior returns in all his glory. Our gospel reading (Matthew 24:23 to 31) takes place very late in our Lord's

ministry and it shows God's love and judgment as administered by his Son. In it our Lord describes his return, his second coming.

In the midst of great chaos and disturbing signs and wonders, there will be counterfeit claims that Jesus has returned. Our Lord warns us **if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect**, so He said, **go not forth; believe it not**. False prophets will arise tempting Christians to worship false gods.

It is like the Geico commercial with Alexander Graham Bell, "As long as people talk to loudly on the phone, you can count on Geico saving people money on car insurance." "As long as there are Christians worshipping God, there will be false prophets and teachers, and even some who claim to be the returning Christ." But unlike paying too much for car insurance, denying Jesus Christ has eternal consequences.

But, do not worry; our Lord gives us the key to knowing the truth. **For as the lightning comes-out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be**. His return will not take place in secret; it will be as ominous as a great lightening bolt stretching from one end of the sky to the other. The whole world will recognize the return of the Son of God.

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Early Christians believed this sign would be the image of Jesus on the cross. **Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn**. We should think of this as an acute awareness of the fact that sin, yours and mine, and all the sins of all mankind, are what made our Lord's sacrifice on the cross necessary.

In the final scene, Jesus paints a portrait so great that it exceeds our ability to imagine: **they shall see the Son of man (God) coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**. Those who have rejected Jesus will cower in fear at the sight of his awesome power and glory. Often, we emphasize the fear of the final judgement, while down-playing the Good News this day brings for all believers. In this final scene, Jesus also said, **He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and**

they shall gather together his elect, his followers, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

We need a Savior because we are not capable of living according to God's laws and will. God desires all to be freed from the effects of their sin; but He knows some will choose to ignore and reject his gracious and loving offer of forgiveness, so we need a final judgment.

We have faith in our Savior; we have received and enjoyed the love of God; we strive to do right according to God's laws and will, humbly and sincerely confessing our mistakes along the way.

So, when the great trumpet sounds, and the glory of our Lord shines brighter than the sun and all of heaven's stars, we can be at peace, knowing we, and all believers are being gathered by the heavenly angels and shepherded to our beloved Savior!

Now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, power, dominion and glory, both now and evermore. Amen.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.