

## In The Critical Interval.

Text: Luke 17:20-30

Suggested Hymns:

4, 163, 15, 304, 330

1) Use The First Advent To Successfully Meet  
The Second Advent

2) Use The Second Advent To Appreciate  
The First Advent

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 17:20-30, <sup>20</sup> *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; <sup>21</sup> "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you. "*

<sup>22</sup> *Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. <sup>23</sup> "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them.*

<sup>24</sup> *"For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. <sup>25</sup> "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

<sup>26</sup> *"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup> "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. <sup>28</sup> "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup> "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Last Sunday we launched on a journey into an untried New Church Year. In setting out on a journey it is natural for us to plan our route. If we are on a business trip, we want to end that business with dispatch. If we are

on a pleasure trip, we are seeking rest and recreation and plan accordingly. It is reasonable for us to keep our goal in mind.

Our life, too, has a goal. There is more to our existence here than a certain span of years between our cradle and our grave. We do not come into this world merely to grow up, eat, drink, sleep, work, play, and sink back into the dust out of which we have been made.

No, we have been made by God and should return to God. God has prepared the chart for us by which to reach the goal He wants us to attain in His kingdom. Let us therefore contemplate *The Right Course in the Critical Interval Between the Two Advents*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Use The First Advent To Successfully Meet The Second Advent**

When we look back across the centuries to the time when the Pharisees came to Jesus with the question, “*When will the Kingdom of God come?*” we are viewing the period of Christ’s first visible advent into this world.

That was the period of which the Old Testament Prophets had spoken in prophecy after prophecy. The Woman’s Seed, the Prophet like Moses, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Redeemer, the Rod of Jesse, and the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, are some of the numerous names which the Prophets used in speaking of Christ whose coming had been determined by God before the world began.

When Jesus came into the world in the fullness of time, the Cross loomed before Him.

Consider the events of the first advent. Go to Bethlehem, to Gethsemane, to the courts of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, to Calvary, and to the open sepulchre. There you see the Prophet of all prophets, the Priest of all priests, the King of all kings, Jesus, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

The angels announced the birth of Jesus in glorious song, saying, “*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*”<sup>1</sup> Angels proclaimed in the empty tomb, “*He is not here; for He is risen.*”<sup>2</sup> Between the manger in Bethlehem and Joseph’s open tomb the greatest, most blessed work this world has ever seen was completed down to the very last detail.

Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary and placed under the Law as the Substitute for all human beings, willingly took the sins of all the world upon His shoulders. Alone He faced the fiery darts of the devil; alone He met the righteous wrath of His heavenly Father; alone He went into death and came forth as Conqueror over all forces that could separate man from God.

God the Father, who had said on more than one occasion, ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,”*** showed His complete satisfaction with the atoning sacrifice of His Son. ***Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***<sup>3</sup>

The first advent of our Lord lies in the past, but people cannot afford to ignore it. For Adam lost heaven through his disobedience in the Garden of Eden. His transgression of God’s divine command was fatal for him and all future generations. His failure to ward off the temptation of Satan plunged him and all his descendants into misery, damnation, and death.

After his fall into sin, helplessness and hopelessness swept down upon him, leaving him prostrate with a conscience that strove to hide from God. The whole history of the human family from Adam’s day down to yours and mine has been spoiled and blackened by sin and evil that have passed down from father to child in each succeeding generation.

Lament as we may over this sad fact, there is nothing we can do to prevent it. There is nothing we can do to change the words of Scripture, ***“The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”***<sup>4</sup> ***Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.***<sup>5</sup> And we read in Ephesians 2:3 that we are ***by nature children of wrath, just as the others.***

No matter in which direction we turn, the truth of these Bible passages is evident. People sing about love, but paralyse it through hate. They grow eloquent about peace, but are always busy in manufacturing implements of war. They hold conferences on co-operation, but give selfishness, dishonesty, and oppression the right of way.

They praise the virtues of higher education, but never get out of the rut which fosters bitterness, irreverence, impiety, and death. This discouraging picture is true of all ages, because the human heart, corrupted by sin, is always the same.

Listen the words of Jeremiah, *“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*<sup>6</sup> and to the words of Jesus written in Mark 7:21-22, <sup>21</sup> *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,”* <sup>22</sup> *“thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.”*

What will be done to those who disregard the work of the Redeemer is what was done to the wicked when the Flood came, and what was done to the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah when the Lord rained brimstone and fire upon them out of heaven.

The doom of the ungodly is clearly recorded in Matt. 25:41-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; etc. Therefore, do not neglect Christ’s great salvation. Thank Him, who redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature.

As we look back to the first visible advent of Jesus, we see the Cross on Calvary and recall the words of our Saviour to Nicodemus, <sup>14</sup> *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,”* <sup>15</sup> *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*<sup>7</sup>

*“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”*<sup>8</sup> is St. Paul’s heart-rending cry when he looks at himself and the world, and realises that neither he nor the world can ever devise any means for a radical change in the human heart and set it right with God.

But on looking back to the first visible advent of Christ and the work that Christ completed then, the Apostle says, *“I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”*<sup>9</sup>

Thus by faith in what Christ wrought in his first advent we overcome the despair the second advent would inspire, and on the other hand we gain confidence to meet Christ with boldness on that Great Day.

The hymnist writes,<sup>10</sup>

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress,  
Wherein before my God I'll stand  
When I shall reach the heav'nly land.

Furthermore, we need to be in God's kingdom to escape the horrors of the Judgment and to participate in the eternal joys and blessings of His second coming. Yes, the Kingdom of God must be within us. It is within those who have received the Holy Spirit and by His grace believe God's holy Word. Nobody can see it, because nobody can look into the heart. It is the true spiritual kingdom, of which Christ says in our text, "*The kingdom of God does not come with observation;*"<sup>21</sup> "*nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.*"

How important, then, in this decisive in-between period to hear, learn, and ponder the events of the first advent that faith and with faith the Kingdom may come and be maintained within the heart!

It does not come when merely emotions are stirred by smooth speaking and the display of costly vestments. It does not make its advent because a sensational revivalist has drawn huge crowds or because numerous people are basking in the dignity of orthodox churches. It does not come with the shout "*Away with the seriousness of formal religion! We need deeds, not creeds!*" It does not consist in cleaning out and rebuilding slum areas, in improving working conditions for the worker, in keeping business at peak production, or in providing security for old age.

When people speak along these lines and think they are working for the Kingdom of God and suppose themselves to be members of it, Jesus says, ***Do not go after them or follow them.*** Their idea of the Kingdom is all wrong.

Rather, the Kingdom of God does come when witness is borne to Christ, when the wonderful works of God, as on Pentecost, are proclaimed, when in public and private ministry the theme is heard, "***Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***"<sup>11</sup> And "***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.***"<sup>12</sup>

Where the Word of Jesus is spoken, it exerts its heart-and-soul controlling power, and it does not return to God void, but ***“it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”***<sup>13</sup>

Thus through the Gospel of Christ’s first advent, peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ is instilled into the heart. Sinners are made to see Jesus as Saviour, Guide, and Friend, who loves and cherishes that which is sacred and holy before God, who sheds the light and peace of heaven into darkened, burdened souls.

To such, membership in the Kingdom of God is not a question of mere numbers and cold statistics, but a matter of personal relationship toward God in Jesus. Whoever would therefore fare well at the second advent, let him make constant use of the first Advent.

## **2. Use The Second Advent To Appreciate The First Advent**

But also the second Advent must be utilised. This is necessary to appreciate and properly evaluate the first Advent.

The second advent is not an advent in which there can be any doubt about its occurrence. There are some people who claim that the second advent has already taken place, even stating the year when it is claimed to have set in, as in Timothy’s days some said, ***“The resurrection is past already.”***<sup>14</sup>

Millennialists claim that Christ will come again to establish a kingdom of earthly blessedness before the final Resurrection and Judgment. Christ speaks in our text of such people who will say, ***‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’*** and warns, ***Do not go after them or follow them.*** No, when Christ comes again, everybody will be definitely and clearly aware of it. His coming will be like ***the lightning***,<sup>15</sup> and ***Every eye shall see Him.***<sup>16</sup>

This will happen soon. Scriptures refer to the second advent as imminent. How much more imminent must it not be today! We read in Romans 13:11, ***“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”***

Our text says, ***“But first He (i.e. Jesus) must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*** That has happened. Another thing has happened and is happening right along is the preaching of the Gospel. This Gospel has been

rejected right along and will be to the end by those who treasure earthly things, but the preaching of the Gospel has never ceased.

Hence we must look for the end.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Antichrist has been revealed more than 450 years ago.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, the exhortation “Watch!” is in place now even more than before.

The coming of Christ will bring the eternal decision. It will forever settle our lot. Then many will desire to see just one more day of Gospel opportunity, but won’t see it.<sup>19</sup> The door will be closed, and to those who knock at Christ’s door too late, He will say, ***“I do not know you.”***<sup>20</sup>

And what that will mean! We read in Isaiah 66:24,<sup>24</sup> ***“And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”***

Must not the very thought of that great and awful Day strike terror into every heart? What sinner can stand before the just and holy Judge? ***“Then said I, ‘Woe is me! for I am undone!’”***<sup>21</sup> What a consolation it should be to us in view of the Judgment that Christ was once offered to bear our sins.<sup>22</sup>

The indifference, the carnal security of man is pointed out in our text,<sup>26</sup> ***“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:”***<sup>27</sup> ***“They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”***

This is with us as much as ever. It will continue to the very Judgment Day, which like a snare will fall on many even while they are saying, ***“Peace, peace.”*** Think of our own era. The members of the Kingdom of God have proclaimed repentance and righteousness and faith in Jesus with a powerful voice by means of the pulpit, the press, and the radio.

But the world is adamant against this pleading. It is interested in food, in dress, in finance, in industry, in social media, in space travel, in good roads, in everything outside of God and heaven.

Competition has made people callous and cold to the interests of the neighbour and froze up mercy and good will. Then the voice of God began to be

heard in a different tone. Wars and terrorism have come. Many people are living in fear. Millions have already suffered. But little thought is given to the soul and its relation to the true Kingdom of God. Sooner or later the world is going to be caught unprepared in the lightning of the day of the Son of Man, and will sink into pain and suffering and eternal death in hell.

Is our old Adam less carnal, less secure, less materialistic? And herein lurks a most insidious peril. Oh, how much is at stake in this interval between the two advents! Go on in such indifference, and suddenly you will find yourself going over the brink into the bottomless pit.

Have you ever pleaded with the Lord for another chance? Here it is. Now take advantage of it. Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ***Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***

May we always keep in view the Second Advent that we may realise all the more keenly, how indispensable are the marvellous treasures of grace which our dear Saviour has purchased for us at so great a price. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:11  
<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28:6  
<sup>3</sup> Phil. 2:9-11  
<sup>4</sup> Gen. 8:21  
<sup>5</sup> Psalm 51:5  
<sup>6</sup> Jer. 17:9  
<sup>7</sup> John 3:14-15  
<sup>8</sup> Rom. 7:24  
<sup>9</sup> Rom. 7:25  
<sup>10</sup> Hymn 327  
<sup>11</sup> Acts 2:38  
<sup>12</sup> Acts 16:31  
<sup>13</sup> Isa. 55:11  
<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim. 2:18  
<sup>15</sup> v. 24  
<sup>16</sup> Rev. 1:7  
<sup>17</sup> Matt. 24:14  
<sup>18</sup> 2 Thess. 2:3



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<sup>19</sup> v. 22

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 25:12; 7:23

<sup>21</sup> Isa. 6:5

<sup>22</sup> Heb. 9:28