

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

**Jesus said**, *"Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your head, because your redemption is drawing near"* (Luke 21:28). What things? Distress of the nations because of socio-economic, political and religious upheavals. People reacting with great fear and foreboding over what is happening in the world. **The great temptation is to look around today and think that Satan has taken control of the world.** But what does the Bible tell us?

From Hebrews chapter 2 we read: *"You made Him [Jesus] for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned Him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under His feet.' Now in putting everything in subjection to Him [Jesus], He left nothing outside His [Jesus'] control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him [Jesus]"* (v. 7-8, bracketed words added by author). The Bible teaches us that **Jesus is in control. Period.** Yes, evil is allowed to have its day, as God uses evil for good. This is a great mystery, this evil being something that is ultimately good for mankind. But this is most certainly true. The problem with humans is that we are not able to see the "big picture." We can't see into the future, and see millions of people turn back to God for strength and support in the midst of chaos and upheaval. As our text tells us, we are not able to see everything in subjection to Jesus, because we can't see into the spiritual realm, and witness how Jesus is limiting Satan's handy work – even today.

American Christianity has, in large part, ignored Hebrews chapter 2. The average Protestant church in America teaches that Satan has **not yet been defeated**, that God is still in a pitch battle with Satan, and that we must await Christ's return, when He will establish His throne in Jerusalem. These churches teach that, on the day of Christ's return, a Rapture will take place. Many Christians will be taken up into heaven, while others will remain on earth. They teach that there will be a 1000 years of peace and prosperity under Jesus' reign, followed by Satan being let loose to mount a final battle against God and His people (Armageddon). This teaching is called **Premillennialism**. It was an early heresy in the Christian church that was put down. It later emerged in the 1800's when a pastor by the name of John Darby thought he saw something the church had missed in the Book of Revelation. It got new wings when the Scofield Reference Bible was printed in 1909.

**For thousands of years, the Church has correctly taught that Christ will return one last time**, and this will be **the end of the world** as we know it. The dead will be raised, and believers and unbelievers will be separated. All unbelievers, those who have rejected Jesus Christ, will be cast into hell for eternity. Those who believed in Jesus when they died, will live with Him in a heavenly new earth for eternity. We are currently living in what Revelation (20:3) calls the 1000 year reign of Christ (also referred to in Rev. 11:9 as 42 months, and in Rev. 12:6 as the 1260 days). Notice that we live in period of the 1000 year **reign** of Christ – where He is in **complete control** of what happens in heaven and on earth.

**So if Satan is defeated already, when did this happen?** Christ's total defeat of Satan occurred on the cross. Christ died for you, taking on your sin. He was the final sacrifice, the final payment that needed to be made. And as Jesus took His last breath, He said, "It is finished." The battle

between God and Satan is over, and God is victorious. Man has been reconciled to his Father in heaven, and all things are new. Satan can no longer lay claim to us, because we have been redeemed – bought back – through our Baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). Nor will our Father listen to Satan's accusations toward us, for Satan has been cast out of heaven.

**So why is Jesus taking so long to return?** God wants everyone on this planet to hear the message of Jesus Christ. He desires that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). When the word has reached the "four corners of the earth," then the trumpet will blast, and Christ will return again in glory – completely victorious over Satan and his fallen angels.

What we know from Scriptures is that **Christ could return any day now. We must be prepared, for He will come like a "thief in the night"** (1 Thess. 5:2-4). And our Lord keeps us ready for that day through His means of grace: His Holy Word and Sacraments. May God keep you from all harm and danger, including the danger of Satan's false teachings, like Premillennialism.

Pastor Travis