

SERMON FOR NOVEMBER 18, 2018

TEXT: DANIEL 12: 1-3

THEME: THE END

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble; such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

In the name of Jesus:

Everyone likes a good story. You may read it in a book, a newspaper, hear it on the news, or watch it on Netflix or in the theater. All good stories have a gripping story line, and hopefully, a happy ending. Every story has an end. It may be happy, it may produce tears, but every story has an ending. My daughter, Emily, who loves to read, has been known to choose books based on the ending. That is, she will pick up a book to read, and look at the end of the book to see how it ends, and if it fits her fancy, she will read it.

In our text for today, through the prophet Daniel, God reveals to us what happens at THE END. As we prepare our hearts and lives for the end of the year celebrations, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Eve, God allows us through the prophet Daniel to not only know the end of the Biblical story, but to know our end as well.

The Book of Daniel is a relatively unknown book of the Bible. Daniel wrote it during the time of the Exile, when Israel and Judah as nations were taken from their homelands to dwell in the foreign country of Babylon. The first six chapters of the book of Daniel tell of the history of the people of God as they were taken to live in

Babylon. Daniel became an advisor to King Nebuchchadnezzar by interpreting his dreams. You may remember how Daniel was thrown into the den of lions because he dared pray to the One True God. You undoubtedly have heard of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the fiery furnace. These events take place in the first six chapters of the Book; the last six chapters are prophecies, which speak of the times to come. In our text for today, chapter 12, Daniel foretells what will happen at The End, the end of time.

Can you imagine what a blessing and Good News this passage is to the people who heard Daniel's message? We all know what it feels like when we have a yearning for home. Whether we are on vacation or traveling some distance to go somewhere, it is wonderful to see the sign signaling that we are getting close to home. I know that when Luann and I travel, it is always good to see the sign telling us that we are taking the exit to get off of route 33 and following the sign to Lancaster. There is always something special about going home.

But the people of Daniel's day were not home, and had no hope of going home in the foreseeable future. They were taken to Babylon, a place far away from home. Jeremiah had told the people that when they arrived in Babylon not to expect to go home but to take up residence there. Jeremiah said: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. <sup>6</sup> Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup> But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you

into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. <sup>10</sup>“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” God told the people that they weren’t going home because of their sin, but after the time appointed and the time completed in Babylon, they would return to their home.

You and I are in similar straits. We long to go home, to be with the Lord and all of our loved ones who have died in the Lord. The problem, though, is that our sinfulness separates us from God and from one another. We want to be a part of one big happy family, but there is division and strife, anger and hatred, dissention and spite that show itself in our relationships with one another. Our sin, the original inherited sin we possess by nature, and the acts we commit which are not pleasing to God separate us from God. We long to be a part of an existence where there will be no more sorrow, hatred, tears and death. But we aren’t. We look at the world around us, the sinfulness that abounds, and we feel lost. I can’t tell you how many times I have said and felt that the world in which we live in has changed, and not for the better. I know that you have felt the same way as well, because many of you have told me that the times we are living in are not like those times we lived in the past. The values we held in the past are now mocked, we are called old fashioned or out of touch with reality because we believe in the Bible and believe in God. We live here but it is like we don’t belong here, things have really changed and not for the better.

This is how the people in Daniel's time felt as well. They longed to go back home but couldn't. So God, through the prophet Daniel, spoke of another time to come, when God would put the pieces of their broken lives together. What God said to Daniel applies to us today. For God in heaven has seen the sinfulness and brokenness that is evident in our world and in our lives. God in His mercy sent Help, in the Person of His one and only Son, to be our Lord and Savior from sin, death, and the devil.

Christ came down from heaven to be truly a part of our human existence. He lived on earth to experience our brokenness, to suffer as we suffer, and to die the death that we all deserve. Jesus did all of this in your place and mine. The prophet Isaiah wrote of Jesus: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

God's only Son, Jesus Christ, not only stands up for God's people but God's Son stands in for you, standing in your place, absorbing your punishment and dying your death. But the Good News of Daniel, and of Christ's victory over death and the grave is that Jesus rose again in the body to life everlasting! And so Daniel writes: "At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting

contempt. <sup>3</sup> And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” There will come a time, and it will be at the end of time, when all of the dead shall be raised, and those who believe in Jesus will rise in the body to live with the Lord, being at home with Him in glory, forever and ever. Never to face sin again, never to taste death again. It will be just as the Apostle Paul says: “ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Paul goes on to say that just as we have been created to be like Adam, so also we have been recreated to be like Jesus. How? In Baptism. For in Baptism the Holy Spirit has washed away your sins and has given to you a new life in Christ. If anyone has been baptized in Christ, that person is a new creation. You have been made a new creation so that you can be apart of the new creation at Christ’s Second Coming. And when He comes, the Bible says that we will be changed. It is a mystery, we can’t fathom what will happen because nothing we have experienced will compare to what will take place on that Day.

“<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the victory that Daniel speaks of today, of the scene that John writes of in Revelation where we read: <sup>9</sup> "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" <sup>14</sup> I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup> "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. <sup>16</sup> They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup> For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This is what THE END looks like for you and me and all believers in Christ. We will be forever with the Lord. So how then should we live our lives while we await this glorious ending? Listen to what the Bible says: “<sup>58</sup>Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” May each of us be faithful to Jesus, for He is faithful to us, and will bring us to a blessed end. To His honor and glory. Amen