

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

His teaching done, Jesus exited out of the temple. But he wasn't done teaching. He still had something to teach his disciples—they prompted it with their effusive praise of the temple buildings. “Look! What stones! What buildings! Magnificent!” they exclaimed. Jesus was not so impressed. These buildings will all be destroyed. “*There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down,*” said the true Temple who would soon be destroyed and in three days would raise Himself back up (John 2:19).

In stunned silence, Jesus and His disciples made their way to “*the Mount of Olives opposite the temple.*” That gave Peter, James, John, and Andrew time to build up their courage to ask, “*when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?*”

Jesus didn't hold back! There will be false Christs seeking to lead you astray. You'll hear of wars and rumors of wars—nation rising up against nation, kingdom against kingdom. It will not be easy for disciples. You will be handed over. You'll be beaten. You'll be called to testify before authorities—governors and kings. Brother will betray brother; fathers their children, and children their fathers—even unto death. You will be hated for the name of Jesus. And it gets worse. In fact, had the lectionary committee not cut our Gospel text short, you might not have been able to endure it, for “*In those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be*” (Mark 13:19). Or as the prophet Daniel says it, “*At that time ... there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.*”

Sounds frightening for sinners who will have to account for what they've done or left undone. But as frightening as it sounds, you will endure it—to the end—and be saved. As you look to Jesus, you will endure it, and you will be delivered as the elect, who have had their names “*written in the book*” of life. For the days of tribulation will come to an end — when Jesus returns in glory — and then comes the fullness of everlasting life.

The days of tribulation will be cut short; they will end when Jesus comes again in glory as we confess in various ways in our creeds: the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds: “From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.” Or the Nicene Creed: “And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom will have no end.” Or even in the Te Deum that we'll sing on Thursday: “We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge.”

But until that Day comes we must endure, and be encouraged in our enduring. We are encouraged as we look to Jesus, who “*offered for all time a single sacrifice*

*[of Himself] for [our] sins.*” He was the perfect sacrifice, the “*lamb without blemish or spot*” (1 Pet. 1:19). His was the all-sufficient sacrifice, done once for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). We are forgiven in Christ, our sins forgotten, sent away, as far as east is from the west (Ps. 103:12); no more offerings for sins are needed. His was a vicarious sacrifice, Christ taking our punishment and offering up His own righteousness to us, that we might be cleansed from our sins, accounted perfect, holy before Him!

His is the blood that gives us access to the Holy of Holies — the place where the Lord dwells. His flesh is the curtain torn from top to bottom as life drained from Him in death, and yet in death, “*he opened for us*” a “*new and living way*” to eternal life, for though we too must pass through death, “*yet shall we live*” as we live and believe in Him (John 11:25-26).

This is our confidence as the Day draws near. Jesus died, but Jesus lives, and “now is death But the gate of life immortal; This ... [calms] my trembling breath When I pass its gloomy portal. Faith shall cry, as fails each sense: Jesus is my confidence!” (LSB490) “*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for ...*” (Heb. 11:1). I have “*the full assurance of faith*” in Christ Jesus.

And even more than Jesus’ death and resurrection for me, I know full well that nothing can keep me from Him because He has given me His Spirit and has given me rebirth into His kingdom. He has made me alive by the grace of my baptismal waters sprinkled over me, giving me a clean heart and renewing a right spirit within me (Ps. 51:10). He has washed my body with pure water and made me clean, not on the outside (1 Pet. 3:21), but on the inside without blemish or spot (Eph. 5:26-7).

And this is my confidence, not that I have done anything by being baptized, or even by believing, but God has promised good to me by them. He has done it, and He is faithful.

What then, you say, until that fearful Day arrives, whether tomorrow or 1,000 years from now? Let us be about the tasks the Lord has given us to do—father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, worker. He has put His laws on your hearts; He has written them on your minds. Love them; delight in them; meditate on them; live them. Yield fruit.

“*Stir up one another to love and good works.*” Let your good works be the external evidence of your faith. And be strengthened for your life of faith and good works by partaking faithfully of the Divine gifts, gathering together regularly to be taught God’s word, to have your sins forgiven, to be built up by the Sacrament, to be consoled by one another.

For Jesus' word definitely teaches us that "The day is surely drawing near, When Jesus, God's anointed, In all His power shall appear As judge whom God appointed." Be on guard! The temple has been destroyed, as Jesus foretold. False Christs abound and false teachers, wars and rumors of war, persecution, betrayal, hatred for the sake of Jesus.

But let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe in Jesus. He went away for a time, but He will come again soon in glory. All is ready! And when the trumpet sounds and your ears hear the voice of an archangel—and you'll hear them, whether living or dead—then "*those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken*"—we who look to the Son and believe in Him shall inherit life. Jesus will come to take us to Himself, and beside our Lord Jesus, the Light of the world, we too "*shall shine like the brightness of the sky above ... like the stars forever and ever.*"

Even so, Lord Jesus. Quickly come!

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.