

THE TIME

IN BETWEEN



A TIME TO YEARN FOR THE END

Last Sunday of the Church Year

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | Seward, Nebraska

November 26, 2023

SERIES THEME: THE TIME IN BETWEEN

In the great timeline of human history, there are only two ultimately significant points: the first time Christ came to our world to win salvation by his life, death, and resurrection; and the second time Christ will come to consummate his everlasting kingdom. We live in the time in between those two points. It is a time of tension. We know that peace and perfection are ours already because of what Jesus did the first time he came. Yet we do not enjoy a peaceful and perfect existence now already. We will not know such a life until Christ comes again. And so we wait and watch, living in the time in between. As the church year draws to a close, Scripture points us toward the end of time when Christ will come again. Until then Christ teaches us how to live in the time in between.

THEME OF THE DAY: A TIME TO YEARN FOR THE END

Consider the Christian man whose body aches from both the cancer and the chemo. Look at that faithful old woman, back arched by time, fingers twisted by arthritis, eyes close to blindness. These believers may pray for death, precisely because they know that for the children of God, death is not the end of life. Death is the end of sorrow and pain. They yearn for the end of those things, and the beginning of their perfect eternity with Jesus. We have come to the end of the Church Year. It is time to talk about the end of this world on Judgment Day. That day does not scare the believer. The first time Christ came he saved us from our sin and the accusations for the devil. The second time Christ comes, he will save us from everything else. On that day, disease, gone. Abuse, gone. Heartache, gone. Even death is ended. None of those things will exist ever again. But we will exist forever with our Lord Jesus. Until then we live in the time in between. As we look at all Christ did at his first coming, we yearn for him to come again to end this broken world and to usher all the saints into everlasting glory.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Quinton Corwin

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Three (page 188 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 494 See, He Comes, the King of Glory

sts. 1–2

Stand

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

Amen.

Confession

CW 189

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Almighty and merciful Father,

we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.

We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.

We have done those things that we should not have done,

and we have not done those things that we should have done.

Have mercy on us, Lord!

Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,

according to your promises in Christ Jesus.

Silence for meditation and reflection

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 190

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Glory Be to God on High

CW 157



Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



We praise you, we bless you, we wor - ship you, we glorify you,



we give thanks to you, for your great glory, O Lord God, heav'n-ly King,



God the Fa-ther Al - mighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Je-sus Christ;



O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sin of the world;



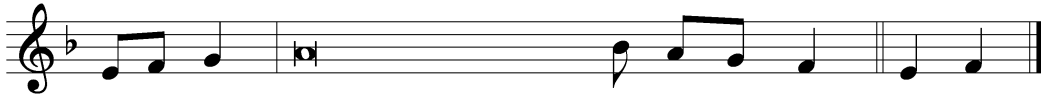
have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; re-ceive our prayer.



You sit at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us.



For you on-ly are holy; you on-ly are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Eternal God, merciful Father, you have appointed your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of his return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for your own from the foundation of the world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Daniel 7:9-10,13-14

The prophet Daniel sees a vision of the Last Judgment that is filled with fire and thrones and books...and a Savior who will establish an everlasting kingdom.

⁹ I continued to watch until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His clothing was white as snow, and the hair on his head was like pure wool. His throne was flames of fire. Its wheels were blazing fire. ¹⁰ A river of fire flowed out from his presence. Thousands upon

thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and books were opened. ¹³ I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him. ¹⁴ To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages will worship him. His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

St. Paul gives us the encouragement that when Christ comes again he shall raise the dead, and death shall be forever ended.

Believers Who Have Died

¹³ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope. ¹⁴ Indeed, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then in the same way we also believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

¹⁵ In fact, we tell you this by the word of the Lord: We who are alive and left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not go on ahead of those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Revelation 22:13



Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

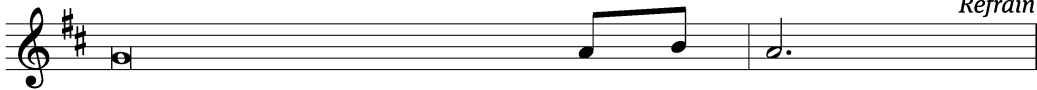


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Tone



I am the Alpha and the O - me - ga,



the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

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Gospel

Matthew 25:31–46

Jesus describes the end of days, when he shall come in glory and separate the sheep from the goats.

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. ³⁶ I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or lacking clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

⁴⁰ "The King will answer them, 'Amen I tell you: Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, lacking clothes and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of me.'

⁴⁴ "Then they will also answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or lacking clothes or sick or in prison and did not serve you?'

⁴⁵ "At that time he will answer them, 'Amen I tell you: Just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.' ⁴⁶ And they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 487 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

Sermon: Matthew 25:31-46

Stand

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became truly human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who in unity with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Eternal and gracious Father, today we end another year of grace. Once again the Holy Spirit has nourished and strengthened our faith as we reviewed the words and works of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. We have rejoiced to hear that you kept the promises you made to your ancient people. We were encouraged as we remembered how you empowered your followers to proclaim the good news in their world.

Work in us every day to believe the truths of your Word and apply them in our lives.

We are aware that we live in dangerous times as Satan and his forces of evil assault your people again and again. Give us wisdom to discern teachings that subtly deny the Scriptures.

Provide courage to stand against the attacks of godless opponents. Strengthen our resolve to confess the truth and then to speak the truth in love.

Work in us every day to be watchful and cautious as we live in our world.

Help us take to heart that your Son, our Lord Jesus, is coming again to judge the living and the dead. Since the day of his return is unknown to us, lead us to note the signs that signal the end of time. Spare us from fear as trouble and woe increase, and fill us with hope as we long for that great day.

Work in us every day to be ready for the moment of his coming.

Fill us with concern for family members and friends who are not taking seriously their need for Jesus and his forgiveness. Provide opportunities to reach out to them with patient persistence and to lovingly lead them to your Word and sacraments. Make us generous with our offerings so that others can go in our place to proclaim the good news.

Work in us every day to witness to Christ and his love for sinners.

Lead us to see our Savior's face in the faces of the poor and hungry, the lonely and forgotten, the oppressed and imprisoned, and move to support them whenever we can. [Today we ask that you keep in your care... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Empower our faith to be lights in the world so that people may see our good works and glorify you and your Son.

Work in us every day to imitate your love for the lost, the least, and the last.

If you call us to glory before the final day comes, carry our souls to heaven where we will await the resurrection of our bodies. Comfort those who may grieve over losing us and point them to the day when they will join us at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Work in us every day so that we are ready whenever you call us home.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Fill us with hope and joy as we await your Son's return. Cause us to enjoy your earthly blessings in light of your eternal glories and to realize that heaven is really our home. Lead us to long for the splendor of Paradise where you will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Work in us every day as we listen for the sound of the final trumpet. Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 547 At the Name of Jesus

sts. 1, 6

THE SACRAMENT

Stand

Preface

CW 199

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who preserves his Church to the end of time, when he will come again as king to judge all people and take his own to glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 200



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts,



heav - en and earth are full, full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal King and gracious Father. In love you made us the crown of your creation. In mercy you planned our salvation. In grace you sent your Son to redeem us from sin.

We remember and give you thanks that your eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh and made his dwelling among us, that he willingly placed himself under law to redeem those under law, that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross, that he has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood in this Sacrament. Forgive our sins, increase our faith, strengthen our fellowship, and deepen our longing for the day when Christ will welcome us to his eternal feast. Praise and thanks and honor and glory be to you, O God our Father, and to your Son and to the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

Lamb of God

CW 202



world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; grant us, grant us peace.

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Be seated

Distribution

Close Communion We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.

Distribution Hymn: 670 I Come, O Savior, to Your Table

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Hymn: 850 It Is Well with My Soul

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship and Communion, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Sunday: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

12/6: 6:30 PM Mid-Week Advent Worship- Grace

12/13: 6:30 PM Mid-Week Advent Worship- Bethel

Christmas Decorating

Following our worship service this morning we will decorate the church for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Trinity Funds Request

Trinity is asking for any financial support that its area congregations are able to provide. Currently they are at a low point in their funds and any help would be greatly appreciated.

CONNECTION CARDS: Visitors or members with changes in contact information, please fill out a connection card online at www.graceseward.org on the member connect tab or scan this code.



Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/gracelutheranseward



Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Sunday Bible Class 16, Worship 40 in person, Facebook Reached 10, Audio/YouTube 8. Offerings: Home 1,572.00, WELS 50.00, NELHS 20.00, Trinity 825.00, Benevolence 25.00 **To God be the glory!**

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