

THE END IS HERE, EVEN AS THE END IS COMING

Hear again the Word of God for this Last Sunday of the Church Year.

But all of you be glad and rejoice forever in what I create, for behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people for gladness.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

The end is here, even as The End is coming. In His grace for us sinners, God has brought us to the end of another Church Year. His mercy in calling us all to repentance is declared when we hear His promises repeated annually on the particular Sunday that concludes another year of His grace. As an old year ends, and a new year of the Lord in the Church approaches, He continually, through reminders of His grace, calls us to watchfulness. To assist us in that, He grants us forgiveness for Christ's sake. God's Word reminds us, each year, that, for those who remain in hopeful anticipation for His return through regular reception of the oil for the lamp of the Faith – namely, Word and Sacraments – that He will give us all we need to fully enter His coming new creation. All of that is summed up for us today through this theme verse:

But all of you be glad and rejoice forever in what I create, for behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people for gladness.²

That sentence brings with it a shift in the emphasis of the actions to which God continues to call His repentant and forgiven people. He tells you, us, to be glad and forever rejoice in that which He is doing. This you are free to do as you anticipate the new creation that God is continuing to bring forth for you.

This day's texts are clearly anticipating the Great Last Day. That is, as you have heard and sung, when the Bridegroom will call forth His people from the darkness of this fallen creation. They, you perhaps, will be caught up with Him to live and work in His New Creation. If you fall asleep in Him, should you die in Christ before that day, you will be called out of your graves to rule with Him in His then fully completed New Creation.

¹ *Isaiah 65:18.*

² *Isaiah 65:18.*

Today, as He has done every year for generations, God is also calling you believers to be glad and eternally rejoicing in that which He continues to do for you until the Great and Terrible Last Day. This is nothing new in the Church. God has done this for millennia.

When the words of our Old Testament reading were first declared some 2,700 years ago, God's people received commands that could be followed because of the assurance of His grace He was even then giving the faithful. That held them in the Faith even though the Northern Kingdom of Israel had perished. The Southern Kingdom had about a century to remain, before it too would pass into history as a conquered nation with her people deported to pagan lands.

God's command to gladness and rejoicing in today's text remained with the remnant of His people until the Last Days began as Jesus died on the Cross. For almost two millennia since they have continued to offer hope to the faithful. This the words of Isaiah do in placing into our ears the sure and certain anticipation of the perfect and complete re-creation to come. For almost three thousand years now, God's promises such as these have rung forth into His Church:

For behold, I create new heavens and new earth, and the former (troubles) will not be remembered, and (they will) not come to mind.³

For you, dear Christian, that eternal reality began when you were washed with the water and the Word. From then on, you began to learn to drown your old nature--that which you inherited from our father, Adam. As you continue to do that daily, your new nature, which you inherited from our Father through the death of the Son, rises up to live before God. That is done in you through the Word of forgiveness, "in righteousness and purity forever," as most of you have learned to confess (SC 2008, 25). All of that, though imperfect in each, and all, of us Christians in our flesh on account of the sin that clings to us, continues to effect the beginning of God's re-creation of that which has fallen.

³ Isaiah 65:17.

That means that God’s promise to create new heavens and new earth – that represents the totality of His New Creation in a perfect sinless reflection of that which He did “in the beginning...” – is begun in every believer through God’s Word of forgiveness. That beginning is received in Holy Baptism. Then God begins anew His new creation in us as we repentant sinners return to Baptism’s regenerative promises through Holy Absolution.

While Christians remain in their mortal flesh, they still may remember the sins of which God has forgiven. Even so, you should be reminded that God has promised to remember our sins no more. He promises to put our transgressions which He has absolved away, as far as the East is from the West⁴.

Yet, on account of the sinful nature that clings to all Christians, we, at times, are troubled on account of our sins which God has forgiven. We who have continued to walk in new life, still are burdened by the effects of sin in this fallen world. That is why we need to hear, regularly, that *the former (troubles) will not be remembered, and (they will) not come to mind.*⁵

That means that, when God ushers in the fullness of His new creation on the Last Day, that there will be nothing in it to prompt remembrance of former troubles for believers. There will not only be no devil, there will be no sin, and no unrepentant sinners in God’s New Creation. There will be no remnants of this fallen world, for God will completely purify this old creation with His cleansing fire. Then, He will recreate the New from the ashes of the Old.

That is truly Good News for us this day. We, as a congregation, the Body of Christ in this place, continue to go through a lot of trial on account of sin. Sin in individual congregational members troubles others. Sin in the world about us brings pressure upon us such as sickness, disease, worldly woes, and, ultimately, death (the Mosque bombing in Egypt a couple of days ago comes to mind). Satan and his minions rage about seeking

⁴ Psalm 103:12.

⁵ Isaiah 65:17b.

whom they may trigger into the trap of unbelief. That is why God's promise that His faithful will no longer remember such former troubles, and that they will no longer come to the mind of the redeemed, is so wonderful. That assurance leads to God's Word of promise in our theme text:

But all of you be glad and rejoice forever in what I create, for behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people for gladness.⁶

God tells you Christians why He commands you to be glad and rejoice. That is, He is creating for Himself – and thus for all who are part of Him – joy and gladness. In the Hebrew formulation rejoicing is connected to the Holy City. Her people are connected to gladness. Such word use means that the ideas are synonymous – Jerusalem and joy are interchangeable, as are Jerusalem's people and gladness.

I pray you realize that you are getting a glimpse into the Mind of God. That is, He sees you whom He has named with His Name as His joy and gladness. In His New Creation, that will be evident to all.

In this fallen creation, it is veiled under God's Word. You may not feel, or even think of yourself as, a reason for God's rejoicing or for giving Him gladness. Yet, when He looks at you through the lens of Christ, His beloved Son, that is what you are! Think about what that means now, even as you recall what it meant to the faithful in an apostate nation that were falling into captivity.

As the kingdom of Israel was falling, in the century or so before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of God's Temple on earth, God called out to the faithful – *in the midst of His sinning people* – with His promises. He willed to grant them the Faith that would allow them to be glad and rejoice in the midst of worldly devastation and destruction. They, we learn from the later books of the Old Covenant writings, all the way into those of God's New Covenant era, they clung to those promises by Faith.

⁶ Isaiah 65:18.

Now, in these Last Days, you too are being called by God to hold fast to the Faith. You are given a reminder this year, as in years past, of God's thoughts about you whom He has re-created into His image. He speaks to and of you who will receive His New Creation in the End, as He still declares:

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people, and will not be heard in it any more (the) voice of weeping and cry of distress.⁷

After that which this congregation has endured in the past couple of months, that brings hope. That is why it is good to hear that, in those who endure to the end in the Faith, that in the re-creation of the Last Day, there will no longer be any evidence of distress. God sees, and reveals to us, the Day when the voice of weeping – which indicates felt pain – will no longer be heard in the Church. God lets us glimpse the unending time when the cry of distress – which indicates pain inflicted upon us – when it will be no more in our midst.

In this fallen world, we in whom God has begun His New Creation need to be regularly reminded of that which God beholds as our enduring future in the New Heavens and the New Earth. God knows that, so He moved the Church Fathers to place readings such as we have today into the annual rhythm of the Church Year. To reinforce the enduring quality of the New Creation at its fulfillment, God through the prophet continues to proclaim:

There will not be in it any more (an) infant of days, and (an) old man who will not fill out his days, for the child (an) hundred years old will die, but the sinner (an) hundred years old will be cursed.⁸

With those words, God uses images familiar to mortal humans to communicate enduring realities. In that which God is even now preparing for His faithful people of all time, there will be no deaths of children – for they will live forever with God in glorified bodies. There will not be old men who die before their time, for their time will never end!

⁷ *Isaiah* 65:19.

⁸ *Isaiah* 65:20.

To reinforce those images, God moved the prophet to also use negative imagery. He declares that the child who might have died will live in perfection. This we know from the Hebrew use of the number 10, the number of completion. It is multiplied by itself, thereby indicating complete completion of life, or eternity.

Then, God reveals through another, negative image His promise for the eternal life that will be for believers. He has already told us, informed you, that you will remember no sin, nor will its remembrance be brought to you. He reveals what that means for unrepentant sinners, and those who bring sin's effects upon His faithful people. He declares that the sinner who remained in sin all his mortal life will be $10 \times 10 = 100$ or complete completion, living in sin. That is, apart forever from all believers in Christ. He goes on to declare of the enduring life of the faithful no longer troubled by unrepentant sinners, sin and all its effects,

And they will build houses, and they will dwell (in them); and they will plant vineyards, and they will eat their fruit. They will not build and another dwell; they will not plant and another eat; for as (the) days of (a) tree, (so) will be the days of My people, and (the) work of their hands My chosen ones will enjoy.⁹

No houses on the clouds are on the eternal horizons for you. That images no strumming harps and floating eternity away lazily! The picture language of this end-of-the-year, end-of-time text is one of work. It is work in joy and gladness, with nothing of this fallen creation left to take that away.

In time, some 2,600 years ago, those promises gave hope to their first hearers in the Faith and their faithful descendants. They would lose all they had. God's punishment of Israel and Judah for their people's unrepentant sins was going to impact everyone, even the faithful remnant in the Church.

To them, and to believers in all generations, God declares that His new creation will hold permanent homes for His faithful people. When your Last Day comes, you will be removed from your earthly home, land and all who love you. You will also be

⁹ Isaiah 65:22.

separated forever from all sin, sinners and the evil that troubles you now. Then, on the Last Day, God will raise you to live in His New Creation, where you will truly live in righteousness and purity forever. God, through images understandable to us now, pictures for us that enduring Day:

(The) wolf and (the) lamb will feed together, and (the) lion as (the) ox will eat straw, and (the) serpent dust (will have) for his food; they not shall cause to hurt, and they will not cause to destroy in all mountain, My holy one," says YHWH. ¹⁰

There, again is God's great re-creation promise. That which sin effected in this old creation, death and killing even to animals, will be gone. All will be peace and tranquility, and all creatures will dwell together in harmony and enduring life. Such divine truth is a good way to complete the proclamation of the Word in this year that is ending under God's grace and mercy. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity XXVII, Last Sunday of the Church Year (*LSB* One-year series)

Psalm 149; Isaiah 65:17-25; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:1-13

November 26, 2017

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse
BBA, MDIV, DMIN

Soli Deo Gloria

¹⁰ *Isaiah* 65:25

“For behold, I create new heavens and new earth, and not will be remembered the former (things), and (they will) not come to mind.¹¹

But all of you be glad and rejoice forever in what I create, for behold I create Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people for gladness.¹²

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people, and will not be heard in it any more (the) voice of weeping and cry of distress.¹³

There will not be in it any more (an) infant of days, and old man who will not fill out the days of him, for the child (an) hundred years old will die, but the sinner (an) hundred years old will be cursed.¹⁴

And they will build houses, and they will dwell; and they will plant vineyards, and they will eat their fruit.¹⁵

Not they will build and another dwell; not they will plant and another eat; for as (the) days of (a) tree, (so) will be the days of My people, and (the) work of their hands they will enjoy, My chosen ones.¹⁶

Not they will labor in vain, and not they will bear children for calamity; for they will be the blessed seed of YHWH, and their children with them.¹⁷

And, it will be, before they call, I also will answer, yet (while) they are speaking, I will hear.¹⁸

(The) wolf and (the) lamb will feed together, and (the) lion as (the) ox will eat straw, and (the) serpent dust (will have) for his food; not they shall cause to hurt, and not they will cause to destroy in all mountain, My holy one,” says YHWH.¹⁹

¹¹ Isaiah 65:17.

¹² Isaiah 65:18.

¹³ Isaiah 65:19.

¹⁴ Isaiah 65:20.

¹⁵ Isaiah 65:21.

¹⁶ Isaiah 65:22.

¹⁷ Isaiah 65:23.

¹⁸ Isaiah 65:24.

¹⁹ Isaiah 65:25