

**Populus Zion, the Second Sunday in Advent, A ✠ D 2009**  
**Luke 21:25-36**

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

1 What if there is no tomorrow? Which of the signs Jesus predicts has yet to happen? On the earth, distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and waves? Check. People fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming on the world? Check. Many will come in His name, claiming to be the Christ? Check. You will hear of wars and tumults? Check. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom? There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilence? Check, check, and check. Disciples delivered up by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death, Christians be hated by all for Jesus' name's sake? Check. These signs are now and have been since the day of Christ's ascension. The Day of His return is immanently near. There may not be a tomorrow.

2 Do not delay. Do not put off until tomorrow what needs to be done today. Even if it confounds your to-do list, get done the things that matter. Just once more and then I'll quit, is dangerous. Yes, I know I should, and I will someday, may prove eternally fatal. Scheduled repentance is not repentance. To plan to ask for forgiveness is to reject forgiveness. Do not put off hearing the Word of God or you may never hear it again. Do not say "no" to God's gifts, lest you miss out on them eternally.

3 Most importantly, do not let your heart love sin. Having seen a vision of the end of the world, St. John wrote to the Church, "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother" (1 Jn 3:4-10). There is a world of difference, according to St. John, between the one who makes a practice of sin and the one who makes a practice of righteousness.

4 The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is not something you can tell by counting a person's sins. Christians still sin, and they will until their day of judgment, the day of their deaths, or the Day of Judgment, the Day of Christ's Return. The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is in what he thinks about his sin. A Christian hates his sin and wants to be free from it. So he prays for deliverance, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly." A non-Christian enjoys his sin, wants to dwell in it, naively assuming the day of his death or Day of Christ's return is a long time away.

5 Repent. Watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times. Hearts

are either weighed down with the cares of this life or lifted up with the cares of the life to come. Everything that focuses on the visible world pulls the heart down: drunkenness, over indulgence, worry, persistent sin, and more. The non-Christian doesn't believe in the Day of Christ's return. The false-Christian looks with foreboding on the coming of that Day. Their hearts are weighed down with the visible things, the things that will pass away.

6 But not you. "Behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" (Mal. 4:1-3). When these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. The Sun that will be a burning oven to the wicked, those who have neither fear of the Lord nor faith in His forgiveness, to those who fear His name, who trust Him for forgiveness, will be a healing light. The Light is death to those who dwell in darkness, who despise the Lord and His ways, but it is healing to those who long to be freed from sin.

7 The Day of the Lord's Second Advent is the Day for which the Church and her Christians long. Why? Because of His first Advent, His Incarnation. He came once for her benefit. He came not in power to destroy the wicked but with meekness to be destroyed. He came to deliver humanity from sin and death by taking all sin and death upon Himself. Let not your hearts be weighed down with the cares of this life. He who came once to die on the cross will return at last to gather all those who belong to Him.

8 When these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. Heads up, not down, your Lord will come for you. He comes now for you, for your benefit. Hearts up, not down, your Lord will come for you. He comes now for you, for your benefit.

9 You're in good company. The Church knows how difficult it is to keep your heart from being weighed down, dragged down with the cares of this life and not those of the life to come. So she prays for you: "Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds." And when she exhorts you, Hearts up; lift up your hearts, she also teaches you to answer, "We lift them unto the Lord." At the Lord's feast, hearts are lifted up, freed from drunkenness and dissipation, freed from the cares of this world. Hearts are lifted with this comfort: Jesus who died for you, who rose for you, comes here for you. He comes to deliver to you His Body and Blood; He comes to deliver you from sin and death.

10 What if there is no tomorrow? If the world has no tomorrow, that does not matter to you because today you have salvation. Today, you feast on the Body and Blood of Him who will return to gather you with Himself to the eternal tomorrow of His renewed heavens and renewed earth. The Day of the Lord's return is what you hope for. Jesus who comes to you today in His Word and in His Supper will come to you tomorrow on the Day of His return. Lift up your heads, the day of your redemption is drawing near. Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

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