

Dear pilgrims of the heavenly pilgrimage, elect according to the foreknowledge of the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

PRAY: Lord, sanctify us by Your Truth, Your Word is Truth

Luke 13:31–35 (NKJV)

31 *On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.”*

32 *And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.’*

33 *Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.*

34 *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!*

35 *See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ” This is the word of the Lord.*

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PRAY: Let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

Blessed is He Who Comes in a Time of Grace

1. He comes in the flesh to work miracles, die, and rise
2. He comes in the Word to gather us under His wing

In the name of the Lamb who was slain and has begun His reign, dear fellow pilgrims, Clocks and timers can give us very different feelings depending on the setting we are in. For a child in a time out, the beeping of a timer is a welcome sound, where he or she gets to return to fun activities. On the other hand, a college student taking a final exam looks at the clock in a completely different way. This clock represents pressure, anxiety, nerves, and possibly, a very bad feeling when it expires.

How should we view God’s clock? God runs on a time unlike ours. Ours is easy to quantify. His is a mystery. Ours is earthly, His is divine. Ours ticks by unrelentingly regardless of what happens, His is an enduring, thoughtful time meant to always serve the good purpose of His grace.

Blessed is He Who Comes in a Time of Grace.

1. He comes in the flesh to work miracles, die, and rise

We call the Passion season “a time” of the Church year. It is calculated in terms of days and weeks, Sundays and Wednesdays. Our anticipation builds as we look with a sober steady eye toward the festival of our Lord’s resurrection.

In much the same way we travel through Luke’s narrative. From December to Easter, between sermons and Bible Class, we will have covered well over half of Luke’s gospel. You should begin to take note of certain elements of the Spirit’s message that are unique to Luke. One prominent theme is “the journey” motif. The Spirit gauges all of Jesus’ ministry in terms of one central goal – Jerusalem. This is highlighted in 9:51 – *Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, (Luke 9:51)*. Again, leading into our text, we read *And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. (Luke 13:22)*. His journey in the flesh is a journey of miracles, death, and resurrection – all culminating in Jerusalem.

The clock is ticking. But Jesus seems to be the only one who really can read this clock.

31 On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

Many attempts are made to get Jesus distracted from His divine timetable. It is difficult to tell what the motives of the Pharisees are here. However, we see one thing. They are asking Jesus to turn away from His journey toward the cross.

Lets think about how we may be guilty of doing the same. Anytime we start to tell Jesus what He should be doing – in our life, in the church’s life – we are really attempting to define His divine clock. Perhaps we do this without even realizing. Why don’t I find the job I’m looking for? Why is my house or car keep having problems? Why do my spouse, my child, my parent keep causing me problems? Aren’t I doing the right things?

32 And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.’

Jesus speaks figuratively. His journey is focused. Closer and closer He comes to His goal. A better translation would be, “the third day I shall finish. I shall reach my goal.” The goal of Jesus’ ministry and miracles was death and resurrection in Jerusalem.

In the last verse, Jesus says, *you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’* That Messianic shout from Psalm 118 will be heard on Palm Sunday. Jesus was a prophet who could die in no other place but Jerusalem. In shouts of Hosannas, the LORD announces that the time has come, that

His divine clock has reached fulfillment. The clock ticks down to the moment of eternity.

It is God who had set this clock – not Herod, not Pilate, not you or I. Jesus must be willingly placed under God's timetable. And this is a rigorous clock. The Law never lets up. It ticks relentlessly, demanding perfection every second of every day. No one would control the sequence of events to spare Him one moment of temptation.

And finally, the third day would be reached. The day where the time of hell meets the time of His heaven; the time of God's wrath meets the time of God's salvation. Thus through Jesus' Jerusalem-bound journey, the time of our sin becomes the time of God's grace.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

This "third day" as Jesus calls is the completion of all He set out to do. It is His resurrection. The clock of suffering and burden stops here. At the cross, Jesus' earthly journey ends, and His glorious journey and ours begins. Blessed is He who comes in the flesh to work miracles, die, and rise.

2. He comes in the Word to gather us under His wing

Again we turn to the clock. How much time remains ... for this sermon, for your life?

Scripture is clear about the grace of God. It never runs out. Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more (Romans 5). However, Scripture does make a distinction when it speaks of the presence and activity of God's grace. Jesus' disciples are sent forth into surrounding villages with these words: *And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. (Luke 10:9-12)*

The kingdom of God is the presence of Jesus. Where His works are seen or heard, there the kingdom of grace is present. It can be near; it can be far away. It can be active; it can be absent. This makes sense when we remember that God works through earthly means – hearing, washing, eating. The Word and Sacraments (which are also powered by the Word) are the means for where and when God distributes His grace. So Jesus comes to gather us under his wing. Blessed is He who comes in a time of grace.

34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!

This is the sad case with Jerusalem. Notice the contrast: “I was willing, but you were not.” Jesus extends the wing of His grace and forgiveness to gather Jerusalem into His presence. But they are not willing.

Jesus refers to the earthly Jerusalem, those Jews of 1st century palestine who are clinging to self righteousness and rejecting the presence of Jesus. Verse 35, “your house is left to you desolate.”

Where the fulfillment of Christ is resisted, where earthly works are chosen rather than God’s grace, this timer ticks closer and closer to the end.

In A.D. 70, God would demonstrate this end. He orchestrates the Roman armies to carry out His judgment, leaving the Temple and Jerusalem in ruins. “Your house is left to you desolate.”

v.35 “...assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”

Jesus could here be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. In that destruction, the Son of Man is proclaiming their forsakenness. In a bigger scope, we should also see Jesus refer to the end of time, to death. On the Last Day, all will truly see the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord; all will see the Chosen One who is has won and freely offered God’s grace – even before those who rejected Him. It will be a judgment of guilt against them.

We should not be so quick to point the finger at others, however. We too by nature are not willing to be gathered. We too especially do not like the accusations of sin that accompany the presence of our Lord’s grace.

How many have ever wished there was a timer on the pastor preaching? I can think of times where I was sitting in the pew and found myself staring at my watch. I can remember times I had more important things to do than come to Bible Class. I can remember times when it seemed the pastor just wasn’t preaching in a way that interested me or applied to me.

Pastors are not without fault either. Perhaps he fails to really dig into the Word the way he should or prepare enough ... Perhaps he lets personal feelings get in the way of God’s objective message ... Perhaps he fails to apply the word to himself first in an honest and meaningful way.

There are countless ways we have fallen short of keeping the 3rd commandment – from neglecting devotions with our families to drifting and not being interested the word at church.

However it is not these sins that leave us forsaken. When Jesus says “you were not willing,” He means it was impenitence left them desolate. Constant despising of God’s grace was the cog that turned the timer. Eventually, that preaching of the gospel departs and the sinner is left alone, under the Law, fending for a righteousness that he will never gain.

But we are not under the expiring time of the Law, we are under the enduring time of grace. Blessed is He who comes in the Word. We too would be forsaken if it was not for power of the Word. The Word has given us the heart to repent, the strength to believe, the gift of forgiveness. Here, among us, Jesus lifts the wing of Word and Sacraments to gather us into His Body, the Church where we are eternally cared for.

And so every communion Sunday, we sing: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” As you sing these words, you should see Christ approaching Jerusalem. The bread which we eat, the wine which we drink is the coming of the Blessed One into our presence. We see Him as those Jews did on Palm Sunday, really present before them; we see Him riding to Jerusalem where His cross awaits, where His death becomes your deliverance, where your sins are paid for and forgiven.

The Word is the coming of the Blessed One, the King who rules in your heart declaring: Your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to Christ that He does not leave us under the ruthless timer of the Law. In Christ, God’s clock has stopped. In hearts where the Word is treasured time does not run out. God has frozen time and delivered us to eternity.

You don’t need to be stressed about tomorrow. When it comes to heaven you don’t need to be nervous about finishing on time. We have finished. We have reached that third day – the goal, His perfect work. Thanks be to God that His forgiveness does endure in the preaching of the gospel – truly a time of grace.

WE PRAY: Dear blessed Lord Jesus. We thank you for stopping time to be our eternal Savior. Continue to grant us Your Spirit that we would treasure and not despise Your presence. Continue to come to us in the name of the LORD, that we would be saved. In that name we are confident you hear us. Amen.