

“Living as Though ...”

What’s on your agenda for today? What do you have lined up for this week? The truth is that we get so wrapped up in our busy lives, with much to attend to – doing what we want to do – that we often fail to listen to the Lord. We live “as though” we have plenty of time for the Lord and His kingdom – plenty of time for repenting and believing.

That’s what the people in the days of Noah thought – and then the rains came, and the doors to the ark were shut. That’s how Jonah lived – doing what he wanted to do – and the Lord stopped him dead in his tracks, plunging him to the depths of the sea.

Even John the Baptist who was busy doing the work the Lord had given him to do – had his life turned upside down, being arrested and thrown in jail. Or, like Kevin Schroder who one day is blading out the driveway of a neighbor, and the next – has a stroke and undergoes surgery to remove the blood clot.

That’s what St. Paul is driving at (in the Epistle reading) when he speaks of “living as though – living “as though” things can change in the blink of an eye. “The appointed time has grown very short,” he says. “Living as though” today could be the Last Day.

This is a wake-up call from the Lord – to look at the world and our lives from His perspective, and not with blinders on – focusing only on what our schedule demands, and what our worldly desires might be.

For this reason, the Lord sends Noah to be a preacher of righteousness to turn the world from its wicked ways. He sends Jonah to warn the Ninevites of the impending wrath that is coming upon their evil ways. He sends John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. He calls Simon and Andrew, James and John, to be “fishers of men” – to preach God’s Word in order to draw men from the dark depths up into the light of His Gospel and to harvest them for His kingdom.

A pastor is a “shepherd.” The Lord has called me to shepherd you – and one of the things He has given me to do, is to teach you to live “as though” – as though your life could change in the blink of an eye.

So, what does that mean? How do we live “as though” the world could pass away very soon? Well, Jesus Himself teaches us. Jesus comes proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

First of all, this does not mean that you should abandon your spouse and family, or quit your job – because He has called you to do these things as well. Your days are full of good works the Lord desires you to do, for the benefit of your neighbor. But first and foremost, He calls you to “repent and believe.”

This life begins with Holy Baptism where the Lord comes to you with His Gospel, repenting you and creating a faith in you that trusts Him alone for the forgiveness of your sins, for life and salvation. That’s the kingdom you live in – the baptismal life you live – even as you serve your spouse, care for your family, and attend to your daily tasks.

Living “as though” the appointed time has grown very short – you live in your Baptism. That means that “the Old Adam in us should by DAILY (continuous) contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should DAILY emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

To shepherd you in this life, I exhort you to pray Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers – giving thanks to God that He has kept you through the night and has given you a new day to live by faith in Him and in service to your fellow man – begging Him to keep you this day from sin and every evil – commending yourself, your body and soul and all things (including your spouse, family, and all the things on your to-do list) into His hands.

And when you go to sleep at night – praying that He would forgive all your sins where you have done wrong that day – asking Him to graciously keep you this night – and once again commending all things into His hands. It means going to sleep in faith, trusting His mercy – whether there is another day for you to live, or not.

Throughout your days, pray the way the Lord has taught you to pray – begging His forgiveness, and by that grace, enabling you to forgive those who have sinned against you. Looking to Him to deliver you from all evil – the temptations and evils you face each day – and then finally, to deliver you once and for all by taking you from this fallen and wicked world to Himself in heaven.

Live “as though” you can’t live without God! As a child of God, come to receive His Divine Service – where Jesus Himself rules over your sin and death with His forgiving blood and eternal life.

His Baptism is like a great fish that swallows you who have sunk to the dark depths because of your rebellious running away from His will. He is an ark of refuge for you, to deliver you, to save you – and then to vomit you out on dry land like He did with Jonah, returning you to your daily tasks of living in faith and love.

Eating His Body and drinking His blood is to receive from Him eternal life, as this medicine of immortality forgives you and resurrects you to a new life. A life lived “as though.” A life lived in His kingdom – a life prepared for whatever the day may bring – a life lived as one who has been redeemed – one who lives in His kingdom, now/today, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.