

Pako Evening Service 4/09/2016 pm.

Scripture Readings: Mat 25:31-46; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Sermon: "The Saviour is coming again"

Beloved people of God,

In the last few weeks I have reminded you of our Saviour who payed for our sin by his death and rose from the dead for our justification. I also reminded you that we have a Saviour who now reigns at the right hand of God the Father in heaven with all authority. From there he continues to intercede for us and gives us gifts to build His church until such time that all the elect are saved.

Well, I have another bit of good news for you today. Once the elect are saved, Jesus will arise from his seat of authority in heaven and return and all creation will bow down before him and proclaim him as king. Phil 2:10-11, makes that perfectly clear, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." At that time, sin will cease, wars will cease, family breakdowns will cease, sickness will cease and there will be no more mourning or crying, and death will be no more and God our Father will be all in all.

So let's be clear that Jesus is coming back for Scripture is clear on this. Acts 1:11, "...This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Numerous parables teach about the return of the king. The parable of the wedding banquet does so (Mat 22:1-14). The parable of the ten virgins does so (Mat 25:1-13). The parable of the Talents (Mat 25:14-30) and our reading from Mat 25:31-46, speaks of the Son of man coming in his glory! Our second reading 1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15, 2 Pet 3 and so forth.

Now if Scripture wasn't so clear on this matter, then you could almost be forgiven for believing that this life of struggles and turmoils is all there is. Psa 90:10, "The length of our days is seventy years or eighty if we have strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass and we fly away." So I for one am thankful that the Lord will return! But not everyone is comfortable with the Lord's return. Some people sincerely wish to be ready for Jesus' second coming, but they make all sorts of excuses for thinking it will be some time yet.

Some suggest that there are meant to be wars, earthquakes, famines and every country needs to be evangelized, and therefore Jesus could not possibly be coming back just yet! Well, some of those things have been going on for many years. Make no mistake, Jesus could return this very hour! So let me encourage you on two fronts as we contemplate that this evening.

First, pray for the Lord's return so that we can speed it's coming. Second, be ready for it, or if you like, be found safe in Christ. Now I am not saying that we should make silly predictions, for Mat 24:36 says, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Yet, it seems to me that people have difficulty believing that we are living in the last days. Perhaps in our present peaceful society we are too comfortable. Perhaps because of the Lord's delay, we are beginning to doubt what the Scriptures teach about Jesus coming again.

Yet, Christians who live in places where there is direct persecution for holding the Christian faith have no problem identifying that they live in the last days. They would probably pray for it much more than we do. And Christians in our society who are finding life increasingly difficult because of illness and the weight of age, wish that the Lord would come sooner rather than later.

But whether we are eight or eighty plus, we should be praying for His return and also be ready for it. It should be second nature for us to pray for the Lord's return. And one day the Lord Jesus is going to return and even though it may catch us by surprise, let's ensure we are found in Christ. I don't want you leaving tonight thinking that this teaching of Scripture is out dated. To do so would be a grave error. One day soon we will see King Jesus return, and our faith will finally become sight. Many will see what they never believed they would see, and Christians will see their hopes fulfilled.

Now in light of this great truth of Scripture, let's remind each other often that this life and this world as we know it will soon end. Yes, our present form of existence is critically important, but not everlasting. Let's indeed, as Jesus taught, store up treasures in the kingdom of heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy.

Now the Bible passages that deal with Jesus' second coming place a lot of emphasis on the character of its coming. It will be a very public thing. The curtain that keeps Him hidden from mortal eyes will be torn and everyone will see. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. He will travel on the clouds. Trumpets will announce his arrival. And everything will be laid bare! Men and women will have to give account for every careless word that has been spoken and everything that was once concealed will be made known.

And the Father will reward those who in Christ showed kindness to the hungry, the naked and those in prison. Those who didn't show kindness will be rebuked. And no one will be exempt. Each person will receive what is due to him [Rev 20:12ff]. It's a scary thought. Everything we have ever said or thought or done wrong will be laid bear. Every action, every thought, every word will be laid bear. In some ways it's scary, but then again, it's meant to be scary.

This Biblical teaching about the last judgment is meant to have a restraining influence on us. It's designed so that we will not carelessly sin or live ungodly lives. In a way God scares us with the last judgment and He encourages us with rewards for the hereafter. Now congregation I want this thought of the final judgment to comfort you and not to scare you. It should comfort you because the Judge is the very one who has already stood trial for us and has already removed the curse for us!

The Judge is Jesus of Nazareth and that should give us great confidence. For Jesus also stood before a judge – remember Pontius Pilate? That magistrate knew that Jesus was innocent, but did not dare to release him. Instead, Pilate let his soldiers play a game with the prisoner. They dressed him up as a mock king. They hit him and spat upon him and placed a crown of thorns on his head.

And then Pilate mocked him more when he placed him before the people and said, "Here is the man! Just look at the pitiful figure of a man." What Pilate said with mockery and scorn, we will one day say with sobs of joy. "Look at Him, the Judge is Jesus, my Saviour and my Judge!"

Now Jesus returning as Judge vindicates what Scripture claims. Scripture always speaks about the judgment of the world by Christ as the climax of his exaltation that began with the resurrection. Acts 2:36 reminds us that, "God made Jesus to be both Lord and Christ." The loud voices in heaven proclaim it in Rev 11:15, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." When Jesus is revealed as Judge, even those who pierced him will see to their horror that Christ Jesus is Lord.

All the leaders of the nations, every human being, rich or poor, great or small, black or white, will kneel at his feet and proclaim that the man of Nazareth has won! They will proclaim what God's word teaches us now, that Jesus was truly the Son of God and Saviour of sinners!

How long O Lord? We don't know! Interestingly, the return of the Judge is taking much longer than the early church expected. They thought the second coming was just around the corner. Paul even has to exhort them to keep working and not to be idle [1 Thess 5:14].

It seems the longer the church has had to wait, the more there has been a shift of emphasis. Most people and churches speak and sing about going to be with Jesus. Countless people ask me, "What will heaven be like?" Very few ask me, "When will Jesus return?"

In fact, the Bible says very little about the period between our death and final judgment. It says very little about our home of bliss. It has more to say about the vindication of the Lord. Often we hear well-meaning eulogies, nice phrases and poems of sympathy at funerals, but much of it is baseless and certainly isn't grounded in Scripture. But the Lord's return is more about him than it is for us!

Now there is a down side to the Lord's second coming. And the one major downside is that once it comes, the time for repentance and following Christ whole-heartedly has expired. And the Scripture's teach that all who do not acknowledge Jesus and what he has done before he returns, will be condemned to everlasting punishment.

That is what the Bible says in 2 Thess 1:8-10; "...He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power..."

Now some people find this teaching abhorrent. However, just for a moment put your selves in God's shoes. He created this whole universe. He made it very good – without sin. His desire was that the pinnacle of His creation, mankind, would just love and adore him for all that he had made and given to them to rule. But mankind, of his own free will rejected God.

And then God in his love put into place the way of redemption. He sends His only, Son into the world to pay the price for mankind's sin. All they need to do is acknowledge God's love to them in Christ and believe. But many still don't. In fact, despite the gift of life and the opportunity for eternal life, they still live as though God doesn't exist! Some reject him outright. Others trample him underfoot after being told and tasting the way of life! So why shouldn't God punish such people? He has every right to do so!

Now others will object and say, well let God punish them for a little while and then forgive them and then let them into heaven. But it doesn't work like that. Not even in our society. It may take you less than a few seconds to murder a little child. If you were only punished for five minutes, it would be a great miscarriage of justice!

It also has to do with a person's worth. You can punch me in the nose and the judge may fine you fifty bucks. But if you were to punch Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull or President Obama in the nose you would be thrown into jail for six months or possibly longer.

God's Son, who gave his life for sinners is of infinitely more value! So common sense tells me, God's word warns and encourages me, true Christians remind me that I should bow before Jesus now, for tomorrow may be too late! Congregation, the Scripture's do not teach that every one will be saved. We reject universal salvation. We reject Rob Bell's teaching that at the end 'love wins'. It's not true!

Yet this teaching of eternal punishment is a burden we carry, for it is not good news. And what's more, it is a teaching we must handle with great care and speak about with compassion and sincerity. We must never forget that we were all under the curse but that it is only God in his grace that has removed it from me. The curse for my sin is no longer for me to bear but placed upon the shoulders of my Saviour and Judge.

Those of us who understand the full impact of that are quiet and have thankful hearts for they realize they have no reason to boast! Yet, this teaching also increases the urgency for us to tell others about the One who has removed the curse. Let us do that with gentleness and respect.

Of course we don't want to tone down the bliss and joy and the glory of heaven for the saved. It will be something magnificent and beyond how greatest expectations. And the wonder of it is that this joy and bliss and the glory of heaven has already begun for those who trust in the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

Jesus tells us in John 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me HAS eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." Jesus says in John 6 verse 47, "I tell you the truth, he who believes HAS everlasting life."

And as true as those verses are, I can't help thinking that we still will be amazed that we are chosen to enter into that glorious place when it occurs! In the story of the separation of the sheep and the goats, both groups were amazed. They are amazed because our entry into heaven is purely a result of God's amazing grace to us. Congregation, the Judge is coming – absolutely – but he is a gracious Judge to those who have him as their Saviour! Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, but repent and believe. Amen