

Lord Jesus Christ, fill our hearts with such joy and confidence in connection with Your Day and the signs which You have given us as heralds of Your coming, that we *readily* raise our heads as those who await You, knowing that Your coming betokens our final entrance into the blessed abode which You have prepared for those who love You, for Your Name's sake. Amen. (Luther for the Busy Man, ed. P. D. Pahl, p. 19, 20)

[Jesus] also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

In Christ Jesus, who came from the bosom of the Father to reveal to us all that we need to know for the present time, dear fellow redeemed:

*F-Y-I: T-M-I!* – "*for your information: too much information!*" Both abbreviations are responses familiar to many today. But another not so well known is *N-T-K-B* – "*need to know basis.*" "*Too much information*" is usually spoken when the things being revealed are too personal or graphic. "*Need to know basis*" is spoken when you only want the pertinent facts, lest knowing more puts the burden of responsibility on the hearer.

Your Lord wants you to know things concerning His coming again for resurrection and judgment. However there are many things we need not know, so He has not revealed them. His concern in our text this morning is that we may disregard what He does want us to know and fail to act upon those things now. So let us acknowledge that **Our Lord Always Reveals What We Need to Know Today.**

### I

Jesus has not revealed the timing of that day, but He has given us the signs, so that we might be prepared for its coming soon. He does not want that day to come upon us unexpectedly. We are called upon to watch and act accordingly.

Certainly we have more sophisticated means of weather forecasting than were available in Jesus' day. But you too no doubt look to the western sky to gauge by its color or shades of gray what you can expect. When the weather fronts come from the southwest or the northwest, we can usually conclude what temperatures we are soon to experience. Yes, I know those

simple indicators may soon be replaced entirely by the ready access forecasts on our phones with an hour-by-hour prediction for our particular location. Based on such trusted forecasts, our plans will adjust as we prepare for the day. If we are going out in the elements we will know whether we take or wear such things as rain gear, shorts, head covers, and gloves.

Jesus gave the signs of His first appearing in the revealed word proclaimed by the prophets of old, but many were still caught unaware and unprepared. We considered that last week as we heard once again the Palm Sunday Gospel, when many rejoiced at Jesus' arrival in the capital city, but they were expecting a gloriously magnificent King who would lead them against foreign occupiers.

A Savior of sinners was prophesied to come, but instead of many in Jesus' day expecting the Savior, which they needed for their lost condition, they primarily looked for a Savior from the sinners outside themselves. Their enemies were seen as flesh and blood – Caesar and his oppressive government, the Samaritans and other Gentile neighbors, the tax collectors, those of other political parties.

Do we not often do the same today? Our real enemies: the devil, the unbelieving world and our own sinful flesh threaten us spiritually, but we get distracted and lash out in our pride and self-righteousness at our flesh and blood neighbors. We readily speak vile things against government officials, other superiors at work or in the classroom, other drivers on the road or those ahead of us in the checkout line, our spouses, parents, siblings and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead of humbling ourselves in light of the Law of God, we project our ill motives and assign them to our many neighbors. We refuse to excuse, speak well of and put the best construction on all those we so readily lash out at, refuse to forgive and even rejoice in their demise.

## II

Should we be the ones to hear these words from Jesus today: “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” Sadly, yes. The present time calls for us to repent and humble ourselves. Our interactions with the many neighbors our Lord places in our lives require it, not only for them, but for ourselves as well.

We share with all our neighbors that same need of a Savior, who lived the perfect life for us under God's Law and who suffered our eternal punishment of death. Those neighbors can fill high places above us in their vocations, but also may occupy the lowest positions in society. Regardless, we share their same need. Approaching others in pride and self-righteousness means we are not interpreting the signs our gracious Lord has given us at the present time.

We lack nothing for today, my fellow redeemed. Our many sins have all been forgiven by the blood of Christ; our need to stand righteous before the heavenly Father on whatever day He has assigned for the judgment, has been filled for us in His Son. Through Word and Sacrament our Lord comes to us preparing us for His reappearing, washed clean and dressed in His eternal righteousness.

You are able to read the signs of the weather today and act accordingly, what about the signs of Jesus' return? The call to repentance and faith surround you. Our Lord is counting on your neighbors being able to see His tender and kind face in you and to hear His gracious words of love and peace through you, so that they too may heed the signs and be prepared for His return.

We have countless neighbors who are being troubled by the many signs we see all around us today: wars and rumors of wars, the increase in wickedness, even godlessness. They hear of dire predictions of natural catastrophes and even what some call man-made catastrophes. Our advantage as Jesus' followers is that we have been told of these signs and what they portend. You and I know by that which our Lord has revealed that the world is coming to an end – the social order will deteriorate and finally be destroyed along with the earth. Many of our neighbors while troubled by what they are observing, do not see these as signs and have no idea how God would have them prepared by His grace.

Here we are once again making our plans for celebrating the birth of the Savior of the world. But how many of us really prepare for that celebration in spirit and in truth? Sadly we often get caught up in the worldly preparations with all the stresses and aggravation associated with it. Instead of humbly approaching this celebration with a spirit of repentance and faith, we find ourselves critiquing those closest to us – the gifts they give to us and their responses to our gifts to them; their invitations to celebrate with them and their responses to ours for them.

The Lord Jesus came to our world the first time fulfilling all the signs that were given His people and yet many of them did not recognize His appearing. Jesus is coming again, He has given us the signs for it today, revealing to us all that we need to know to be ready for His invitation to our heavenly home. But it is more than just information. The Word of the Lord is the very power that prepares our hearts and minds to receive Him rightly.

My fellow redeemed, pay attention to the signs today. The end is coming, the end of all our misery, shame and condemnation is soon here. Lift up your heads, not in pride, but with all eager anticipation for what He has prepared for you with His holy flesh and blood. In Him we are forgiven for all our sins, even for our many failures to be properly prepared for His return.

Rejoice in this season of preparation to receive of His grace in Word and Sacrament, so that in the celebration of His birth you receive what He desires for you right now here today, namely, forgiveness, life and salvation. All you need to know today has been revealed by God's Son, our Savior and brother and by His grace given to you. That day will not take you by surprise, in Him you are fully prepared to stand righteous before God in heaven forevermore. Amen.