

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear fellow redeemed, you who are declared holy in the holy name our Father in Heaven,
In the Gospel lesson today we heard Jesus warn us to be watchful,

lest our hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life.

So that we may constantly remember to be watchful, and to stay awake, He gave us signs.

Things that when we see them happening, we will cry out to God, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

But man is impatient and we get lulled into complacency quite easily.

These signs have been happening ever since Jesus gave them to us.

But to ignore these signs, or to let the cares of this life overshadow our spiritual cares and concerns,
or to weigh ourselves down with drunkenness and shameful sin and vice has eternal consequences.

Earlier in Luke, Jesus also taught **Just as it was in the days of Noah,**

so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage,

Luke17:26-27

until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

So that we are to be able to lift up our heads in hope on the Last Day when our redemption comes,
let us learn to bow our heads and hearts in humble confession and prayer:

Grant, dear Father in heaven, that Your Word is taught in its truth and purity and that we, as Your children, live holy lives according to it so that Your name is hallowed among us and before all, whom Jesus came to redeem. Forgive us for the times when we take Your holy name in vain, when we do not call upon You in our trouble. Deliver us so that we glorify You now and in eternity.
Amen.

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ... And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. ... "But I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." ... Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

In Noah's day, **the earth was filled with violence** and unholiness. It is no different today.

In fact, some of the signs Jesus gave us include this: the **love of many will grow cold,** ^{Matthew24:12}

there will be wars and rumors of wars, ^{Matthew24:6} etc. The end is near. It has to be near.

But the Church has been preaching that for 2,000 years. The world is tired of hearing it.

And if we are honest with ourselves, we grow tired of hearing it, too, at times.

But if the world was destroyed in the flood and Noah and his family were the sole survivors,
perhaps we can learn a thing or two about watchfulness from him.

And let us do this beginning with consideration of the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer,
starting there because that's where God started in our creation, when we were created in His image.

We were created holy, as He is holy, and we desire to return to that holiness,

so we pray "**Hallowed be Thy name.**"

Now you know that *God's name is certainly holy in itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it would be holy among us.*

Luther does a great job of summarizing how it is recognized as holy among us:
when God's Word is taught in its truth and purity,
and when we as children of God live holy lives according to it.
And we see a great example of this in Noah.

Our text starts, **Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.**

This does not mean that Noah was perfect, but as we read in Hebrews,

he **became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.** ^{Hebrews11:7}

It means that he believed God's Word, not only about the impending flood, but most importantly, about the Christ who was to come and be born into the world from Noah's own family line, as **God established His covenant with Noah.**

This perfect Son of God and Son of Eve who was yet to be born, He was Noah's righteousness.

Then after receiving the Lord's Word about the destruction slated for the earth by a flood, Noah lived according to that pure Word.

He taught that Word to his family, his friends, and those who lived around him.

As a **herald of righteousness,** ^{2Peter2:5} he warned them of the destruction to come.

And he built the ark. Our text ends, **Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.**

In Hebrews we read, **in reverent fear Noah constructed an ark for the saving of his household.**

By this he condemned the world... ^{Hebrews11:5-7}

In Noah's day, the Ark served the people as the sign of the end, the destruction of the world, of course, for Noah's family, it was the sign of salvation from the destruction of the world.

But the sad fact remains that only 8 people were saved in the ark.

Only 8 people believed when the flood came upon the earth.

But what happened since chapter 3 when everyone on earth believed, though corrupted by sin?

After Cain murdered Abel, the Lord banished Cain and his family from His presence.

In so doing, He separated the unbelievers from the believers, the Cainites from the Sethites.

While the Cainites continued to disregard God's Word and will, adding sin upon sin,

The Sethites **called upon the name of the Lord,** meaning they publicly gathered for prayer.

Today we would say that they "went to church." So what happened to all the other believers?

Might you expect that the Cainites became more and more violent and finally wiped the Sethites out?

I am sure that there was certainly this physical persecution of the Church,

but this is not what God reports was the main cause.

It wasn't persecution/martyrdom, but lethargy, apathy, and apostasy on the part of the believers.

Moses tells us in Genesis, the believers, the **sons of God saw that the daughters of man,**

the unbelievers, **were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.** ^{Genesis6:2}

The believers took on more and more the life of world, its priorities, cares, and lusts.

Slowly we begin to be concerned more about **the cares of this life** and world

than we do about the holiness of God and His name, and therefore also our own holiness.

The world does not care about Jesus, except to shut Him up, to speak against Him.

As Simeon told Mary and Joseph in the temple: **“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.”** Luke2:34

The world does not care about holiness, except that it craves it but only on its own terms, and by its own corrupted ideas of holiness and good works.

The world does not desire to be in God’s presence because it does not desire to give up its sin, the things that it does care about, its violence, its injustice, its lusts, its self.

When we welcome into our homes and lives, the cares of this life, we care less for holiness and God.

We have less need for the family altar, for personal and family devotions and prayer.

We have less need for the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit in our choice of wives, or the strong, understanding, honorable, devout character in our choice of husbands, and instead sell ourselves for the lentil soup of fading beauty and good looks.

When we take on the cares of this world, the presence of God becomes something fearful, instead of the precious gift that it is, a place to have our sin washed away, be declared holy.

Then you don’t need to “go to church,” even though it is the work of the Spirit to gather us.

Then you don’t need absolution for our sins, though it is the Spirit’s work to sanctify us.

Then you don’t need the Lord’s Supper, though the Son of God invites you regularly to

“Take, eat,” and “drink of it all of you,” and commands “Do this, in remembrance of Me,” not “leave this undone” so that you may forget about Him.

As you see the cares of this world, the lusts, the violence, the injustice, the wanton outbursts of sin, weighing you down & infiltrating your home and life, recognize them for the signs that they are.

These are the signs that Jesus is coming again. Coming in glory to judge the world.

Repent of your lust, your drunkenness, your injustice, your care for the empty worldly pleasures.

And pray, **“Hallowed be Thy name,”** so that you may hear and believe His holy Word, and live according to it.

Then look to the sign of your redemption. Look to Christ, your righteousness.

That is, look to those signs that He has given to you and to the world that brings you holiness.

As the world saw Noah’s Ark, and looked at it as a cow at a new barn door,

without understanding and derision, so it looks at the flood of forgiveness called Baptism.

Baptism, which corresponds to Noah’s flood, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That good conscience is another way of saying ‘holiness,’ for only the holy have a good conscience.

Cherish your Baptism, which has saved you, and continues to drown your evil lusts

and raises you above the destruction by giving you a place in the ship, or the nave of the Church.

Look to the sign of the spoken Word of Absolution, the judgment and declaration of holiness from the courts of heaven... from the mouth of God Himself.

Look to the sign of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to you now in and with

the forms of bread and wine to give you His body and blood and His righteousness as your own.

For as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

And when He does come, like righteous and blameless Noah, you will walk with God, not in fear, but boldly and confidently as a child walks with His dear Father. Amen.

Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Goodwill toward men! Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria