

Populus Zion  
8 December, Anno Domini 2019  
St. Luke 21:25-36  
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In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those who believe that the planet is being destroyed are actually right. And they are absolutely correct that it is man's fault. But they are thinking too small. The entire universe is falling apart and we are to blame for all of it. Ironically, those folks are actually better about paying attention to the signs of the world's demise than God's children are. I'm afraid that we are too quick to dismiss these signs as just a political ploy. But even the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of these signs and tells His children to pay attention to them. They are preachers of the impending apocalypse. They should be constant reminders that this world actually is passing away and will be destroyed.

That being said, those who are issuing the warnings and dire predictions actually have no idea what they are talking about. And you can tell by their reaction the prospect of the destruction of the world - sheer panic and terror. This world is their god and nothing is more troubling to them than the thought of no longer having it. And man absolutely is the problem but not in the way they would have us believe. It isn't our straws or combustible engines that are the problem. It is our sin that is going to bring about the world's destruction. Sin and death are ripping creation apart piece by piece, day by day. The roaring of the sea and the waves, droughts, fires, climate change, deadly diseases, human trafficking, the threat of nuclear war, empty churches, riots, dumpsters full of the pre-born, collapsing stars, galaxies being swallowed by blackholes, murders, mental illness, depression, anxiety, anger - the evidence is everywhere if you'll pay attention to it. When man decided that creation was his personal play thing and that the Lord God Almighty who created all things was not to be taken seriously, he set creation on a path of death and destruction. The created order was turned on its head. And now, every last atom of creation is decaying and dying.

Contrary to evolutionary fantasies, nothing is getting better. Instead, everything is collapsing and falling apart, not only the physical world, but also man's thoughts and understanding of life. The shadow of sin and death is growing darker and darker. Men's understanding is slipping further and further into absurdity as we become more turned in on ourselves and away from our Creator. At every turn we are taking the good creation of God and pressing it into perverse, destructive

purposes. We can recycle all the things and get rid of every single car on the planet but the world is still going to end. We ourselves are marching day by day toward death. And no amount of health or money will stop it. Death has gripped all of creation. Nothing is spared. Everything will pass away - the stars, the sun, the moon, the earth, governments, corporations, your home, your wealth, your reputation, your stuff, and you. All of it is passing away.

Everything except the Word of the true and only God, the Lord and Giver of Life, who created all things. His Word is forever. It doesn't change. It doesn't weaken. It doesn't decay. It is as permanent as the One who speaks it. And this is why Jesus tells His disciples that as they see these signs they, unlike the unbelieving world which runs in panic and sorrow, are to lift up their heads and rejoice precisely because this death-filled world is passing away and the Lord Jesus is returning in glory to institute a new creation for His children, a creation that will never know sin or death or decay. The devil will never set foot in the new creation and thus his poisonous lies will never be heard, the icy-cold hand of death will never be felt, tears of sorrow will never be cried, bitter cries of anguish and repentance will never be uttered.

Look around you. All that you see will be burned up in the fires of judgment as sin and death are destroyed. Nothing in all of creation will be spared. No one will be able to stop it or escape it. It is inevitable. Rejoice! This sick, sinful, dying world is not forever! That is good news! Your life may be filled with heavy crosses, you may be in the midst of fiery trials right now, you may be in the midst of dark and difficult temptation, you may be suffering intense persecution - but none of these things will last. They will all come to an end. What will remain is what God has spoken about you. He said "Your sins are forgiven, washed away. Your iniquity is pardoned. I have taken away your guilt. You are righteous and holy and pure. You are a child of God." You are a member of the body of Christ and on the Last Day you will be gathered together with all the saints to dwell in the new creation where, as St. John writes according to the revelation given to him "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." (Rev. 22:3-5)

That day that we so desperately yearn and pray for has yet to be revealed. But the signs and reminders of its impending arrival are everywhere and we need to pay attention to them. We need to stay awake at all times and take very seriously the

dangers that surround us. Don't simply dismiss these things as natural occurrences. They are as unnatural as death. They weren't designed into creation. They happen because creation is broken and falling apart and hurling towards destruction. Adam and Eve weren't ever going to have to watch forest fires rage and destroy thousands of acres. They weren't going to have to flee as the flood waters washed away their home. They weren't going to sit by their child's hospital bed as he received another round of chemotherapy.

So these things should always shock us. They should waken us out of our slumber, back into the reality of this world's brokenness and our Lord's final return. They should drive us to prayer, asking that our Lord would grant us His Holy Spirit to strengthen us so that we may escape the judgment, so that we may be found still in our Baptismal faith when the Lord returns so that we can stand in joy before the Son of Man, our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ. They should drive us to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ which alone are able to give life and salvation to dying sinners. They should drive us to the Body and Blood that have once suffered death to make atonement for sin and that now sit, glorified at the right hand of God and are now given to us as food in the Holy Communion.

These things alone will endure and all whose place their trust in them. Christ has given us these precious gifts so that we may endure, so that we may join the one, holy, Christian, and apostolic Church in gathering around the throne of God to receive the life that He freely bestows through Christ. And what are those words that will endure forever? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved." Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed said "Take, eat; take, drink for the forgiveness of sins." On the first day of the week, after He had risen from the dead, the Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven." The Lord Jesus said to His disciples "When you pray say Our Father, who art in heaven..." These words of forgiveness and salvation will endure forever. They will always be true. And all who receive these words of the Lord in true faith will not only not be afraid on the Last Day, but they desperately desire that day to come. They pray "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly and save us" because there is nothing that the children of God want more than to be in the unveiled presence of their heavenly Father, shielded forever from the terrors and torment of sin, death, and the devil. The children of God know that this world has nothing to offer them and want nothing from it. They have no interest in the cares and pleasures of this world because they desire what is eternal. They are content with their daily bread because they are only sojourners passing through on

their way to eternity and they don't want anything to distract them or keep them from their heavenly home.

Children of God, don't fall asleep. Don't let yourself settle into this world. It is not your home. It is passing away. Be content with your daily bread and long instead for the true bread that will not pass away or leave you hungry. Fill your hearts and your minds and your ears with the words of the Lord your God so that you may endure the tribulations that lie ahead and receive the crown of everlasting life.

In the Name of +Jesus.