

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
November 6, 2011
Last Judgment**

Romans 2:2-11; Daniel 7:9,10

Based on Truth!

**Hymns: 206 – 209 –
Distribution: 207, 220
Closing: 210 (vv.1-2)**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism. Romans 2:2-11

As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Daniel 7:9,10

It is the Last Day, the end of the world, Judgment Day. And thanks to Daniel, you and I are privileged to be standing shoulder to shoulder, able to witness it all with a front row seat. As we look on, thrones are set in place. God everlasting, the Ancient of Days as Daniel calls him, enters and takes his place. The glory of his appearance is indescribable. His clothes are as white and blinding as the cleanest blanket of fresh snow. His hair, too, is just as white, symbolizing the wisdom and perfection that are his. There is also fire all around. His chariot throne, symbolizing his all-present rule, is ablaze and a river of molten fire flows from its base. This fire of God is what the ancient Israelites referred to simply as "the Glory of the Lord." The angels who surround the throne are beyond count and before this throne, standing beside you and me, is every person who has ever lived. The energy and wide-eyed excitement is like nothing any of us has ever experienced. All of a sudden the court sits, and a hush goes across the entire room. Not one of us can breath as the Judge puts his hand on the book. We lean as we peer, trying to get the first peak inside. Though not one of us can utter a sound, we are all wondering the same thing, "What is written on those pages!?!?"

Well, Daniel doesn't tell us. However, as we turn to the Letter to the Romans and look at chapter 2 of Paul's words there, the Apostle lets us in on the reality of what is inside that book we are told about in Daniel. And, to be honest, Paul's words at first are a bit of a bubble burster. That excitement that we had as the book was opened turns into a "hang your head" reality because Paul speaks about what this book is and, more importantly, how it is written. It is the book of deeds spoken about in Revelation. It is the record of every thought, word and action of every person of all time. And those deeds will now be the basis for eternal judgment for every person standing before the throne. It will happen just as Jesus mentioned in the Gospel lesson with the parable of the sheep and the goats.

And Paul gives us more crushing reality; this judgment of deeds is based on truth. Not the subjective truth of human beings, the truth by which we seek to justify our actions and lessen our mistakes and errors, but the absolute truth of the Judge Almighty. Paul tells us that every act of every person is recorded so that "**God can give to each person according to what he has done.**" And as God looks out, there are two possibilities for what he sees and a result for each of them. "**To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being**

who does evil, but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good.” Once again, at the end, just to make sure we are aware, Paul again states that this is all based on truth, there is no favoritism.

And the reality of the truth of that judgment is bad news for the lawbreakers whom Paul speaks against in Romans chapter 1. If you look to that section of Scripture, and read through the laundry list of sins, you are liable to blush at the evil that Paul mentions. On the day of Judgment, those evil, perverse, senseless ways will be called to account.

However, and this is Paul’s main point, the reality of the truth of God’s judgment is also terrible news for us as well. It is bad news for people who have a tendency to stand in judgment of others. It is bad news for people who shake our heads when we see people fail. It is bad news for people who would often rather speak about another’s sin rather than confronting them and helping them through it. Paul’s message is clear: Though your sins might not be as blatant or as egregious or as violent as others, you and you and you and you (point to each section) are not going to escape Judgment.

And that is because the Judge has a simple standard. There is always one question that is asked, “Have you done it? Have you obeyed the Law of God perfectly?” Over and over again in his Word, he states that his standard is perfection. And when applying that standard, no matter who you are, the answer, when you consider that question, has to be, “No, I have not.” And to that, the Judge has a quick response, “Then you die!”

And Paul describes in great detail the pain that accompanies that eternal death in hell for lawbreakers.

On the north side of the harbor down in Tacoma right before you head up the hill into Federal Way, there is a scrap metal drop-off and what the machines do there is amazing. Garbage trucks and school buses are crushed and pressed into large cubes. Then they are crushed and pressed some more into smaller cubes. Then they are crushed and pressed into still smaller pieces. The trouble and distress that Paul says is in store for every lawbreaker is just like that. The word picture used here in the Greek is to being constantly crushed and pressed against. Even when you don’t think it can be done anymore, it keeps coming. That is the burden of hell for every lawbreaker. That is the punishment doled out without any favoritism. That is the verdict when the book is opened by the Almighty Judge. For each and every person, it is based on truth.

And that should really make us dread the scene which Daniel gives to us in his book of apocalyptic prophecy, the opening of the Book of Deeds.

However, there is hope. And that hope is alluded to through one letter in Daniel’s account of the judgment scene. At that moment of anticipation, Daniel said the bookssss were opened. On the Day of Judgment, the fiery, just Judge will open the book which records each person’s thoughts, words, and actions. But he will also crack open another book, the Book of Life. This Book is made up of the names of the people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior from their sinful deeds. As God judges based on truth, where a person is marked with the sign of the cross, he sees people through the scope of Christ’s perfect sacrifice. The works motivated by selfishness and evil are nowhere to be found for those who are listed in the Book of Life. Where the judge sees the cross, there are seen only works of perfection.

And you can be confident that your name is written in that book. You can be confident because you have received the sign of the cross upon your heart and upon your head in Holy Baptism. Each time, you see that sign of the cross and hear the words, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” you can remember that your name is in this Book of Life. You can be confident because each time you come to the Lord’s Table, you are assured with Jesus’ very body and blood that he died and rose to write your name in that Book of Life with his blood. Every time you open up the Word of God to feed your faith, your confidence can grow. As God looks at you, he also sees the cross. As God looks at you, he sees perfection. As God looks at you, he only sees works of faith, works of perseverance which can be rewarded with eternal glory, honor and peace on the great Day of Judgment.

Because we are confident of that, it allows us to look at the Last Judgment through different shaded glasses. Where sinners see fire and rage and terrible judgment when they look at the Judge; those marked with the cross, those in the Book of Life, see glory, grace and almighty power that gives great assurance. It allows us to view this day that fills many with trepidation as a day of glorious culmination. And we can thank God that it is based on truth. It is based on the truth of his Word. It is based on the truth of his promises. And for that reason, I can’t wait until I’m standing shoulder to shoulder with each one of you on the Day of Judgment. I can’t wait until the books are opened. Amen.