

RALLY DAY

September 11, 2022

Isaiah 59:14-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; St. Luke 10:17-20

“There Is Nothing New Under the Sun”

- I. What's Happening
- II. Out of Season.
- III. Thank God and Rejoice.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

It was a Sunday morning a little over thirty years ago when a father of a boy who was about to enter 7th grade confirmation class stopped to talk with me. What the father said to me is not a verbatim quote, but very, very close. "I know your teaching will keep him on the right path." I said, "Not really. A lot of it depends on the day-to-day influence of his parents, and even that is no guarantee in light of the influence he will receive from his day-to-day friends and schooling." The boy was confirmed at the close of his 8th grade year. His church life ended somewhere near the end of his high school years. I've not seen him since. This is not an unusual case.

This is Rally Day. A lot of what you're about to hear has been stated or quoted here throughout the years, but as you know . . .

THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

I. What's Happening.

Progressivism is defined as "a political philosophy in support of social reform (Oxford English Dictionary)." It ultimately turns everything over to the thinking of elitists. Author Anthony Esolen wrote,

But since man cannot take one step if he fears that the ground may collapse beneath him, the progressive must turn to something that promises, if not peace, at least the tense and temporary stasis (balance) of a truce. He will not bow to a natural order, but will lie with awful reverence...That is the state-made-god, to which he cedes (that is, yields) an ever more control over as many features of human life as possible. Thus does a cabal (group) of lawyers in Washington determine who gets a wedding cake from a Christian baker trying to run his business in peace. (Anthony Esolen, "War Without End, Amen," Chronicles, March/April, 2022, p.18.)

Do you get the picture? *Progressivism* is a euphemism for saying that humanity, either without God or by creating a god to its liking, will solve all its problems. So, tell me, How close are we? We're not! When will it be fulfilled? It won't! *Progressivism* has been on earth since the beginning. Our Old Testament lesson reveals where this kind of thinking will take everything to the very end:

Justice is turned back and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey (Is. 59:14-15a).

The truth of that continues. The Scriptures clearly define wickedness and its consequences. It clearly describes this world's course; its increasing wickedness and desire to mutually, globally, turn from God to self-worship. Those who confront the world are demonized, or imprisoned, or killed.

God said, "Woe to those call evil good and good evil...who are wise in their own eyes (Is. 5:20-21)." Jesus said, "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Mt. 25:37)." Those days were packed with corruption and violence. This is where we are. Jesus said "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth stress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves (i.e., the noise and tossing of humanity in turmoil), people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world (Lk. 21:25-26a)." This is where we are.

Many ask, "Where are all the children? Where are all the young people." But there is no need to ask these questions. Examine what's pulling them away! Look at the thinking and doing of the day that openly opposes Godliness. Listen to what Jesus said: "...you will be hated by all nations for my names's sake. And then many (a lot!) will fall away and betray one another and hate one another (Mt. 24:9b)." We must step out of our fantasy worlds and look, and carefully examine what God's word teaches us. This is where we are: somewhere near the end!

Our children swim in an alphabet soup that cannot spell "God." Most church adults rarely, if ever, make any serious study of God's Word a part of life, and then wonder why everything is such a mess. The Psalmist declared the obvious: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps. 119:105)." Most church people find themselves running into all kinds of obstacles and wonder why. The problem is that they rarely, if ever, turn on the light!

II. Out of Season.

In our Epistle lesson, God had Paul write, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:1-2a)."

In light of what much of the church in this country has become, I find God's word to Paul remarkable. God did not tell Paul to instruct pastors to create whatever it takes to draw people. The Holy Spirit had him clearly state, "Preach-the-word...in season and out of season." Guess what? The Word, for many, if not most churches, is out of season. For many, the worship screen in sanctuaries posts Scriptures that avoid conflict and controversy. For many, the goal is to find a church in lock-stop with cultural wants and demands. Paul stated what would happen. It is happening!

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (vv. 2b-4).

It's been said before - many times - but sometimes it slides into the abyss of self-wants. I'm talking about growth in the Word of God for our children, our teens, our families, our elderly, the single, the struggling marriage, the sweethearts in love, the widow, the widower. Many of you here know that. Some don't grow because they don't know the Word.

I can't help but recall an incident from several years ago. We've experienced this situation several times over the recent past. Pat and I were sitting in a local restaurant. As we were eating and talking, I glanced to my right and saw a family of four - mother, father, daughter and son - each toying with their cell phone - non-stop - while they were eating. I wondered, could we possibly become more distracted and shallow? I don't wonder...anymore.

III. Thank God and Rejoice.

In our Gospel lesson we're told: "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name (v.17).'" Jesus ultimately responded with, "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (v.20)."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we can't live in a fantasy that this world is finally going to overcome its troubles and our dying and death because of sin. But we can **rejoice** because Christ's suffering and death paid for our sin and earned our heaven. **Rejoice** because, as Scriptures teach, "...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world...(Eph. 1:4a)." **Rejoice**, because as Scriptures teach, "even when we were dead in our trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5)." **Rejoice**, because as Scriptures teach, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow...(Is.1:18)." **Rejoice**, because, though life is uncertain to us, Scriptures teach, "the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps (Prov.16:9)." **Rejoice**, though we face the grave, Jesus said, "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (Jn. 14:3)."

It is significant that Rally Day falls on 9/11. We recall that on 9/11 of 2001, twenty-one (21) years ago, everything was thrown into incredible and excruciating turmoil and fear. Globally! It has happened before, but not to that degree. The official date given for the Pandemic is March 11, 2020, over two

years ago, globally. Plagues have happened before. Covid-19 has been considered the worst. This world's hatred of Christ, the want of a one world order in which everyone thinks alike, and the intensification of corruptions and lies....well, the words must be heard again: "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man (Mt. 24:37). Fear and foreboding. Globally.

Jesus said, "For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Lk. 21:27-28). We're beyond "when these things begin to take place." So, "raise your heads" and **rejoice**, because we belong to Christ - now - and forever!

Rally Day. Where will we go with it, this year? What time do we have left to prepare our children and ourselves for that great and glorious Day? Indeed, let's lift our heads and prepare together for everlasting Joy and Life, for, since, as far as the way this world thinks and functions, as Solomon said, "**there is nothing new under the Sun** (Eccl. 1:9)."

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott