

RALLY DAY

September 11, 2016

Isaiah 59:14-16, 2 Timothy 4:1-4, St. Luke 21:25-28:

“Another Rally Day Sermon”

I. Where We Are.

II. Out of Season.

III. Rejoice.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

One of the Presidential candidates is attributed with this statement: "I believe the primary role of the state is to teach, train and raise children. Parents have a secondary role." That statement is one of the foundational points of totalitarian, elitist thinking. The fact is, so much of present day child rearing is the hope that somebody, or some institution, will do what parents can't or, mostly, don't want to do: raise their children.

So it is that parents blithely send their children to grade school, Junior High School and High School without so much a thought as to what they're actually receiving in these 21st Century environments. And I do not wish to offend the school teachers in our church. We love these dear ones and are very thankful for who they are and what they offer. However, they will become less in number.

Then there's the university system. I recently purchased a book entitled "The Compact Guide To World Religions" which was published in 1996. In the chapter on Marxism, contributing author Rick Hood noted the following, which was making its way into the university system during my years, the early to mid 60's. I assume, and desperately hope, you understand that Marxism is an atheistic "worldview" that puts everyone, except the totalitarian elitists who over see it, on an economically, sociologically and spiritually equal footing. Many of us recall former Communist Russia which I don't think has changed all that much. Rick Hood wrote:

Even in American universities, Marxism wields tremendous influence. An article in *U.S. News and World Report*, January 25, 1982, stated that there were 10,000 Marxist professors on American's campuses. An article in the August 29, 1989, *Denver Post* stated that as many as 90% of faculty members of some midwestern universities are Marxists. The influence of these professors on the thinking of students in the U.S. universities should not be underestimated. (Dean C. Halverson, General Editor, *The Compact Guide To World Religions*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1996, pp. 144-145)

It's not very difficult. Much of parenting lacks vigilance or is purely lazy, or horribly distracted by a horribly distracting world. And when it comes to the church, it's a lot easier and more conducive to a distracted life style to take the children somewhere where they don't have to memorize a bunch of questions, actually learn and comprehend a bunch of Biblical/Theological terms, take a bunch of tests and, ultimately, stand in front of a bunch of family and strangers for a public examination.

Rally Day. It is not for children and parents only. It is the call of Christian education for adults and children. It definitely has *fade away qualities* for churches such as . . . ours. And yet, what we attempt to do here is outstanding! So, let's consider . . .

ANOTHER RALLY DAY SERMON

I. Where We Are.

Here's the Old Testament reading from Isaiah:

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. 50:14-15a)

The Scriptures clearly define wickedness and its consequences. This world, this culture, **wantonly** oppose this. Those who confront the world are demonized or imprisoned or killed. Nevertheless, God said: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil...who are wise in their own eyes." (Is. 5:20-21) This is where we are. As Jesus said, "There will be signs in sun and moon and

stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves (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. Somewhere at the end of the end!

Our children swim in an alphabet soup that cannot spell “God”. We offer the best study programs. I can’t begin to tell you how disheartening it is to consider so many adults, parents and children who are rarely, if ever, in study here. In light of how infected everything has become with vileness, meanness, obsession with sexuality, murder of the unborn and anti-Christ thinking, from government on down - well - we need to re-think our thinking. Quickly!

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...”. (vss. 1-2a)

Don’t you find that remarkable? God didn’t tell Paul to instruct the pastors to create some new and innovative program. He told them, “preach the word...in season and out of season.” Guess what? The Word - at least for the faithful churches in America - is, for the most part, “out of season.” You can do what a fair number here have done - what many are doing throughout faithful churches in this country - you can run to what appear to be safe, comfortable churches marching lock-step with cultural wants and demands. You can become what Paul said would happen:

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. (vss. 2b-4)

It’s your call! It’s one way or the other. The need of strengthening, growth in, and understanding of the Word for our children, our teens, our families, the elderly, the single, the struggling marriage, the sweethearts in love, the widow and widower is without excuse.

I’ve told of this incident on several occasions. About a year ago, my wife and I were sitting in the alcove of one of our restaurants waiting to be seated. As we were talking, I glanced a bit to my left and noted a family of four - mother, father, a daughter in her mid teens and a son probably in his early teens - sitting there - each toying with their cell phone! I wonder, can we become more distracted and shallow? Probably.

III. Rejoice.

In our Gospel lesson, the seventy-two returned all excited about the authority Jesus had given them to cast out demons. And Jesus’ ultimate response to them was: “...do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (vs. 20). The same holds true for us. **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 as white as snow...”. (Is. 1:18) **Rejoice**, because, though life is uncertain to us, the Scriptures teach, “the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” (Prov. 16:9) **Rejoice**, though we face a grave, Jesus said, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (Jn. 14:3)

Though we see the growing and fierce darkness, humanity being shaken to its very foundation 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 rejoice**, because we belong to Christ - now - and forever!

Back in late June, my wife and I went to the supermarket one afternoon. As we were walking to the door, about three cars from where we parked was a woman (I'd say in her 50's) loading groceries into the trunk of her car. We didn't know her, but as we walked by, we said, "Hello" to her. She responded likewise. We took about three more steps and she yelled out, "Christ is coming back!" We turned and she had a huge smile on her face. We smiled and I said, "And soon, we pray. All the signs have been fulfilled." She smiled and said, "It's all coming together." And I said, "And very quickly." She agreed.

The awareness is everywhere, don't you think? For the unbeliever it's the *roaring of the sea* and waves of turmoil, uncertainty, *fear and foreboding*. For Christ's people, it's a massive wake-up call. You know, "straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

How interesting that this Rally Day falls on 9/11. On 9/11 of 2001 (15 years ago), everything was thrown into incredible and excruciating turmoil and fear. Globally! It's happened before, but not to this degree. The globally growing hatred of Christ, the demand for a one world order in which everyone walks in lock-step together in their thinking, the uncertainty of everything, the intensification of lies and deception by world leaders - well - Jesus' words must be heard: "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." (Matt. 24:37) *As were the days of Noah. Fear and foreboding. Globally. It's all coming together.*

Rally Day. Where will you go with it, this year? What time do we have left to prepare our children and ourselves for that great and glorious Day? Will you be part of our efforts? Are we ready? Let's lift up our heads! Our Redeemer is drawing near!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott