**February 25th 2024 Reminiscere Sunday**

**Text: John 8:21-24** 0706

**Theme: The End.**

May the peace and hope of life everlasting, through Jesus Christ, dwell among you all as each of us hastens toward the end of our earthly lives. Amen. Dear men, women, and children of faith: Time moves swiftly, and our lives waste away in the blink of an eye. One moment we are healthy and young, the next we are sick and dying. It seems that overnight our lives are passed by and they are nothing but a memory soon to be forgotten. Because of this many people seek to live their lives in such a manner that they will be remembered long after they pass from this earth. There are some whose lives are remembered and celebrated. We may think of great American heroes like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. Perhaps we would remember great men of science like Gregor Mendel, Isaac Newton, and Thomas Edison. We may remember great artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Vincent Van Gogh, and Pablo Picasso. Maybe great composers like Beethoven, Bach, and Chopin. But even these men, the greatest of their particular fields, passed away and are remembered only for a few moments of their lives. Their personalities, relationships, even the way they looked in many cases, are long since forgotten. They are remembered only as a name attached to some great work, nothing more. David said: *“Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” (Ps. 39:4-5)* David shows that even when man is in his prime, at his very best, it is still vanity, it is imperfect and frail. There is a point when each of us must face the inevitability of our mortality. Even the greatest men to walk the face of the earth have come to the end. They wasted away in the same manner as the homeless, the wretched criminals, and the despised people. In the end there are no great men, there is no such thing as rich or poor, mighty or weak, for all men come to the end. There is no fountain of youth, no potion which staves off death, no medical procedures, no healthy lifestyle that will preserve our bodies. When we come right down to it, each and every one of us will pass away from this life, we will become old and sickly; we will contract a disease, have a heart attack, suffer a deadly accident, or otherwise meet our end.

For this reason Moses implores God: *“so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12)* Knowing, as all men know, that our end is coming, what manner of people ought we to be? I speak to all who hear or read this sermon. What of your end? What will you cling to at the end of your life? Will you cling to whatever you accomplished in this life, however “great” it may be, or however vain? Will you hold out hope of any kind at your death? In truth you will eventually have to face these questions, whether now, or when you lie on the point of death contemplating what lays before you and what lays behind you. Upon your death, whether you believe it or not, you will be like unto the rich man or Lazarus. It will not be both, nor will you avoid it by ignoring it. Open your ears, hear the Word of God, do not set it aside, pretending that this does not apply to you. To the Christians I directly say, often we lose sight of, over the course of time, what is ours by virtue of the faith granted unto us by our great God. Here we will remember and consider the end, the end of our lives, the end of our time here on earth. We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at verse twenty one.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, dearest Lord God, we implore Thee to grant us the comfort and peace which passeth all understanding throughout our lives, but especially at the time of our deaths. We confess unto Thee that we are fearful of passing from this life and that this is due to our flesh, doubting Thy precious promises unto us. Grant us a strong faith in Thee that when we are come face to face with our death, we may not fear but cling to Thee as our Rock and Fortress, knowing that we shall pass from this life and enter eternal life. Look with pity, O Lord, upon all men who currently do not believe in Thee, and grant unto them repentance unto life. Show unto them the end of the path they are on, and show unto them the path of life. Help us to be lights unto a sin darkened world, telling Thy truth in love, not profaning Thy name among men, but hallowing it, and thereby showing the world that they shall die in their sins except they repent; believing that Thou art the only Way to salvation. We pray especially for those of our families and friends who have rejected Thy truth for the lies of Satan. Open their ears and eyes, convert and heal them of their sin, and grant them and all of us salvation through faith in Thy meritorious suffering and death. Amen.

Let us hear the preaching of our God unto us, learning first that the end of man in unbelief is:

1. **Death in despair.** We read verses twenty one and twenty four of our text: **Read verse here.** Our text is a dialogue between Jesus and the Jews. Often we imagine in most of these instances the Pharisees or some sect of religious leaders are speaking. Our text, however, seems to be speaking of a group of Jews, part of the regular population. Likely it included Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes, and Jesus also speaks to them. Our Lord tells them without mincing words that they will die in their sins. He speaks further to this in verse twenty four, clarifying that if they do not believe in Him they will die in their sins. Now the sinfulness and wickedness of mankind are apparent for all to see on a daily basis. How can one seriously say that there is no such thing as sin, when we view events such as shools shootings, transgender events, abortion clinics and the like. In addition many claim that certain things are only wrong because society deems them so. Yet how can something be wrong if there is no higher being holding us accountable? If there is no God, no heaven, no hell, who is to say that it was wrong of any criminal to do what he did? In their opinion they must concede that each person making up their own morality can do whatever pleases him best. If one may abort a child, divorce their spouse for no reason at all, marry whomsoever or whatsoever they want, then why cannot this a young man murder seventeen people if he so chooses? Because you say so? Who are you to determine morality for me, or me for you? In truth the result of the worldly mind is chaos, murder, fornication, and immorality of all kinds. They have created what they supposedly detest so highly. Thus sin is evident, corruption is plain, and where there is sin there is a soul that is being held to account for those sins by God. Therefore, when death comes upon a person, they must come face to face with their own conscience, their own sinfulness, their own corruption. It is inevitable. And one who comes to this point, without faith in Christ, has no other option upon his deathbed than despair of hope and comfort. What comfort is there in one of our family members telling us that we did great things in this life, even if you are a person like Newton or Washington? What comfort or peace could ever be given to one who has despised the grace of God in Christ? Of a truth, I tell you there is no comfort which can be given, for as Jesus said, they will die in their sins.

You see, their sins were paid for, their debt is paid in full, and in a manner of speaking, this grace is deposited into an account with their name on it, however, without faith in Christ, this account cannot be accessed. Faith allows access to the forgiveness gained by Christ during His suffering and death. Again look at what the rich man realized when he found himself damned because he rejected the grace of God in Christ. He did not believe and thus he was judged according to his sinful wretched works. He begs for even a drop of cold water, for a little comfort from Abraham. Yet none is given, none will ever be granted. We hear of those souls that die in their sins: *“The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” (Rev.14:10)* Many even venture to say that if God damns them, then so be it, because they lived lives of relative morality, and it would be unfair of God to damn them because of that. But they only say these things for two possible reasons. Either they are trying to convince themselves that they can reject God and His Son and still gain heaven, or they are ignorant of the seriousness of their own sinfulness. Sin is not just the breaking of an arbitrary command of God, but sin is open rebellion against God, a declaration of hatred and enmity against Him that will not be tolerated. Search inside yourself and you will find that this is so. A person who approaches death, or even one who sees the years passing away can do nothing but despair at the thought of damnation, or that this is just the end. Either way there is no comfort, no hope, and is the reason why they must “make the most of their lives.” Yet in the end it is all vanity and vexation. Nothing lasts, nothing stands for all time, they will be forgotten, men will move on, and their memory will last as does smoke in the air, disappearing after but a moment. Despair is the end of these unbelieving souls.

Yet all the believers’ end will be:

1. **Death in hope.** We read verses twenty two and twenty three of our text: **read verses here.** No greater comfort can be given unto one who faces their death, or when one of our loved ones faces death, than to know that salvation through faith awaits every Christian. It can comfort a grieving heart, it can offer hope to a dying person, and gives peace to a troubled conscience. Jesus says that He is not of this world, but the unbelievers are of this world. By this statement Jesus implies that those in faith are also not of this world, for we have our abode in Christ. Later Jesus says: *“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14)* You see by faith we are already departed, at least spiritually from this life. We currently have eternal life, and being taught this by Scripture, by the Holy Ghost, we apply all the promises given unto us at such a time as our end, when the terrors of conscience, and attacks of Satan against us are at their strongest. We lean on the mercies and grace of God in Christ, who died and rose again so that we might be saved. And thus, when we are accused of having sinned too much, or our flesh is prodded to doubt the existence of God or of heaven; God, through faith, comforts us with the assurance that like as Christ has been received into heaven and is not of this world, so too we shall receive heaven and are not of this world. This is not all that there is, dear Christians. We have awaiting for us the joy of dwelling with our merciful Savior for eternity. The wicked shall inherit torment, the just shall inherit comfort. The wicked shall inherit despair without end, the just shall inherit peace without end.

Contemplate this all who hear, the end of our lives is near no matter how old we are. Consider your end, dear men and women. Ask yourself why we teach, why we are implored to listen. Do you honestly believe that Christians simply want to deprive you of fun in this life? To the Christians I say continue to hope in the Lord, and I promise, and more important God promises that we shall not be ashamed. We will reap the fruit of salvation, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We hear in Proverbs: *“the wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death. Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.” (Prov. 14:32-33)* It is foolish to live your life as if there is no God, no sin, no salvation or damnation. It is closing your eyes to danger like a fool, and if there are any hearing or reading this that think this way, I tell you, you are a fool, and you will die like a fool in your sins and be damned. I implore you to think on these things, repent and believe. Yet those who live their lives in the faith of Jesus Christ have hope and peace, they are made wise by the Spirit of God and will die in the wisdom of God almighty, forgiven, saved by the blood of their Savior. Praise God that we have been granted forgiveness and salvation, and let us pray that we remain in this faith unto our end that we may pass away in hope, rather than despair. *“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 7:24-25)* Amen.