**March 3rd 2024 Oculi Sunday**

**Text: Luke 12:42-48** 0708

**Theme: The Warning of Jesus.**

May each of us today receive the warning of our Lord and Savior, pointing to the evil and wickedness which come against us on a daily basis, threatening to destroy our faith and bring us into condemnation. Amen. Dear Christians: More than eleven years ago I accepted the call of this congregation to be her minister, her servant. From that time onward the Holy Spirit has laid on my heart that there was great, impending danger, that Satan was going to work hard to destroy this congregation, and the souls within this congregation. Many times over I have expressed this in sermons, attempting to warn of this danger. On January 25th 2015, God had warned through my sermon: “Have you ever felt evil in your presence? Have you ever known that Satan is near to you, attempting to put doubt or fear into your heart? This feeling is like unto a storm that is brooding. It is far off at first and comes closer and closer to you. You can sense and feel the danger; you can almost foresee the impending downpour; the coming lightning and thunder which makes you shudder. You know that you are powerless to stop it; you have no power to avoid the oncoming storm, and the closer it gets the more you tremble; the more your heart is filled with anxiety knowing that it is near. This past week I felt the presence of evil. It feels to me that the storm is brooding; it is building and the impending downpour of wickedness is closing in. Perhaps I am wrong; perhaps this is nothing more than anxiety and stress, but I believe that the sermon text for today was brought to us by God for a reason. It comes at the very time when this sense of evil is enveloping me. We must remember that the Scriptures are God’s Word to us, they are given as an appropriate and timely help to the believers. Thus we cannot just ignore the timing of this text, nor can we assume that the teachings of Scripture are for an ancient people, but not as relevant today. No each Scripture reading and sermon text is given by God as a timely lesson for His people, the Church. Thus we are wise and prudent to apply its teachings to what is the current state of the Church and especially of our congregation.” More than nine years ago God had given us the warning that Satan was near, that the impending storm was coming. That storm is now upon us, dear Christians, it is here. Satan has made inroads into our congregation, and is dismantling it piece by piece through false doctrine espoused by false teachers in our broader fellowship. Through impatience, through worldly-mindedness, through weariness. Today God is renewing the warning of nine, or more, years ago. The apostle said: *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Eph. 6:12)* The spiritual battle rages on, the storm is pouring down upon us, and our flesh wants nothing more than to just take the easy and wide path of destruction, for on that path Satan leaves us alone. In fact, he will often make sure we are very comfortable so that we might not turn from that path. But when we are on the narrow path of faith in Christ our Savior, Satan brings upon us as much suffering as he can. He will stop at nothing to have our souls. I cannot stress enough how important the recognition of this danger is. Those who do not take heed are putting their own souls in grave danger. I implore each of you to stop for a moment and consider where you are and what privilege is granted unto each of you here. This is literally a matter of life or death, for those who become weary in fighting the spiritual battle, or who grow tired of waiting, or who seek to be mixed with the world, or who despise the grace God has given them by the faithful preaching of the Word do not heed properly the warning of their Lord. Please do not pass by this sermon without taking it to heart. Please carefully consider what is here said, for though outwardly in the world, things seem to be getting better, the fact of the matter is that Satan is coming at us harder than ever. Be ready, be ready to face him. With these thoughts in mind let us consider the warning of Jesus. We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse forty two.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most gracious God, as we live in this world we know from Thy Word that we must through much tribulation enter into Thy kingdom. Yet we are deeply saddened by what events we see take place on a daily basis. We pray, O Lord, that Thou wouldst bind us together in the most holy faith and pure doctrine which Thou art pleased to give unto us in Thy compassion toward us. Help us to not do despite unto this Thy grace, taking it for granted, and putting our own souls in danger. Give us faithful hearts unto Thee, that we may not set aside Thy will for ease, for comfort, for greener grass elsewhere. Keep from us the hatred and wickedness of our enemies, namely our old evil foe. Lord we ask that Thou wouldst plant an hedge about this congregation that it be preserved from annihilation, from destruction. Be with us, O Savior, give us refuge under Thy wings, and cause peace to reign within our midst. Give us grace that we take to heart Thy warnings, and avoiding all worldly-mindedness, serve Thee alone. Prevent us from making excuses for sin or when we do not want to follow Thy will, but rather guide us by Thy Spirit to know Thy will, to hear Thy Word and keep it, even when it is hard, even when it is uncomfortable. Make us wise and faithful servants, O Lord, and bring us safely to the promised land of heaven. O Lord grant us grace to remove us from this present, corrupt, and evil world, to Thy glorious and gracious countenance. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of the warning of Jesus, seeing first His warning:

1. **Against weariness.** We read verses forty five through forty eight of our text: **read verses here.** Our text is somewhat jarring to us when we first read it, and it is meant to be, for any stark and accurate warning given to us should cause us to sit up in our chairs and take notice of the warning given, especially one which comes from God Himself, from Him who came to sacrifice Himself for our sins. Jesus is not just here speaking to pastors when He says servants, but He is speaking to all Christians. He is saying these things to all of us. He first begins this warning by saying if a servant grows impatient at what he perceives to be delay by the Lord, and subsequently refuses to do the will of God even though He knows what the Lord’s will is, has sold his own salvation in favor of worldly living, ease in our lives, a retreat from spiritual warfare, and to make ourselves more comfortable. Many might use the excuse that they cannot continue on because there is never peace within the church, or they do not want to attend church because despite the fact that they would receive the truth of God, they would prefer to be entertained in some way, or that they desire to be participants in the world and so slowly depart from God’s will in favor of the pleasures of this life. At the end of the day what each and every one of these things has in common is that tyranny, spiritual tyranny, is being imposed. We can look at history and find how it is that tyranny is imposed on a people or nation. It is always done incrementally, a little at time, step by step until finally the people willingly and zealously sell themselves into tyranny and later realize that they had made a huge mistake but have no way to correct it. In the same way Satan seeks to tyrannize men, particularly Christians, and he does so incrementally. Little by little he convinces us that the Lord delays His coming, that the warnings of death or Judgment Day are ‘far off’ and we have plenty of time. And he introduces a multitude of excuses for us to ignore the Lord’s will. “church is too boring”, “I’m tired of all the fighting”, “fellowship is unnecessary”, “I’m only willing to give one hour a week to the worship of the Lord”, “I will just indulge this one time in this sinful act, well maybe two, or three…” Now it is sure that we might be able to convince other men that our actions are justified, we might be able to hide from our minister, we might be able to dress up our weariness to look pious on the outside, but God is not fooled. He knows the true inner motions of our hearts. He knows our excuses, He knows our follies and our sin, and this warning today is telling us that very thing. Do not be weary in waiting for God and following God’s will, even when it means that you will have to be uncomfortable, even when it means much more work for you. For if we think like the unfaithful servant in our text, as Jesus says, we will be found unprepared when we are called from this world, whether at our own death, or when Christ returns in judgment.

I continuously pray for each one of you, that God would keep us from weariness and the deceptions of Satan, and that God would open your ears to hear the truth taught here. At the end of the day, however, I cannot force someone to heed this warning of Jesus, but I do know that the Holy Spirit works through what I now say and speaks directly to each of you: beware of the devices of Satan, for rest assured he is coming after you, and his ways might seem to be small and insignificant now, but when multiplied over time the margins become so wide that faith is lost. Beware Jesus says, beware of weariness, beware of ignoring the Lord’s will. The apostle tells Timothy: *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (1 Tim. 6:12)* The good fight of faith means to be engaged in the spiritual warfare which comes because of the faith given us, but disengaging from the battle is very dangerous, for it is akin to forfeiting the battle, or is very close to it. Here we have the warning of Jesus against weariness of fighting the good fight of faith, and He further warns us:

1. **To be faithful.** We read verses forty two through forty four of our text: **read verses here.** Our text begins by the Lord pronouncing a blessing on those who are faithful and wise stewards, who give their household their portion of meat in due season. Now this alludes to ministers, absolutely, but it also is spoken to all who have souls under their care, whether that is fathers, mothers, friends, or whoever. In other words Jesus is speaking to those who are asked to fight the good of faith, to continue on being faithful to the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ and His will. It is parallel to what Jesus says in Revelation: *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” (Rev. 16:15)* The garments spoken of are the righteousness of Christ covering over our sin and shame, and those who throw off their garments walk naked, and it is those who sell the grace of God in favor of their excuses, in favor of the world, out of fear, out of ease, out of convenience. Yet those who keep their garments are those who by the eternal Spirit through the Word are kept covered by the blood of Christ, covered with the garments of righteousness, who are faithful and wise stewards for their household and take care to provide the true Word of God to those in their care and for their own souls. Now Christ never says that those who do such things are beyond hope, or that they have sealed their sentence of damnation, but they are putting themselves in grave danger, they are assisting in the incremental steps which eventually out them back under the tyranny of sin and Satan. Dear Christians I plead with you to hear, not just with you ears, but with your heart: put away from yourselves those thoughts, those excuses, and turn to God in sincerity and honestly asking Him to cleanse your soul, to slay the old man, to overcome the temptations to apostasy! Please her his warning! Please heed the advice given!

The pronounced blessing of Jesus in our text is one of endurance to the end, one of enduring faithfulness to God to our last moment on earth. This, of course, is accomplished through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, and is in no wise a product of ourselves, however, the work of the Holy Spirit can be resisted because it done through means. Jesus is here proclaiming to all Cristians to be and remain where the truth is found, to be where the means of grace are given, to be and remain in the Word of God and the public preaching of the same. If we remove ourselves from these things, we are at the same time removing ourselves from the Sanctifying work of the Spirit in keeping us and have imperiled our own souls. But if we are found there, then the almighty work is accomplished in us, and we abound in the glory and hope of salvation through the shed blood of Christ. This is clearly taught in Scripture: *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail.” (2 Pet. 1:10)* Let us then, dear Christians, heed the warning of our dear Savior, and let us pray that God would defend us and protect our souls. Let us give thanks that God has to this point given us an abundance of grace, and keeping us from apostasy and shame. *“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.” (Heb. 13:15)* Amen.