**August 4th 2024 Tenth Sunday after Trinty**

**Text: Luke 12:51-56** 0731

**Theme: Discerning the Time.**

May the Lord our God ever grant you grace to discern the times we live n that we be not deceived into misbelief, despair, or other great shame or vice. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: God the Holy Spirit works to sanctify us, that is, to put off the old man concerning the former evil lusts and to bring forth the new man created in righteousness and holiness after the image of God. As a part of the works the Holy Spirit grants gifts unto His people, varying gifts in both the gifts given and the degree to which they are given. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit grants these gifts to Christians as a part of their sanctification. And these gifts are to be used by the Christians for the glory of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom of grace as good stewards of His gifts. One of these gifts is the gift of discernment, that is, the ability to discern between good and evil, between the lusts of the flesh and the will of faith. Paul said: *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another* ***discerning of spirits;*** *to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1 Cor. 12:7-11)* Now Paul is describing special gifts granted unto Christians which all may not have, but he does mention discernment as a gift of the Holy Spirit unto Christians. However,the writer to the Hebrews said this: *“For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Heb. 5:13-14)* Strength of faith and knowledge of the Word are those who have been raised to strong men in the Word of the Gospel, and to these especially is the gift of discernment given. Yet it is given to all Christians in measure. All Christians by virtue of the faith and Spirit that dwells within them has at least a small measure of the gift of discernment.

Now discernment is very important in the life of the Christian, and in his walk in the sanctification of the Spirit. As we have seen all Christians have a measure of this, for their faith helps them to see sin and to see righteousness. But there are degrees of this ability. An example of this is the gift of grace to discern between orthodox and heterodox doctrines, and to discern between the will of the flesh and the will of God. According to our fleshly eyes these things can be difficult to discern, for they often seem grey and dark, the truth not immediately apparent. Now we have spoken often about the difficulty of seeing current events for what they truly are, and to not be deceived through emotional manipulation, fear, or confusion. Yet there is one way, and one way only, wherein a sinful man can accurately discern his own time and the events of his own time, and that is by the infallible Word of God. Using God’s Word can guide a sinful, and otherwise erring man, to the truth and give him the ability to discern these difficult things. Now the time in which we live has become chaotic and confusing, there are wars raging in the world, and rumors of impending wars with new rumors flying daily; the political world is in chaos; and society seems to have lost its collective mind. Yet these things should not move us, dear Christians, for we have the gift of discernment, and the gift of God’s inerrant Word. Let us then pray that God give us the gift of discerning the time. 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 fifty one.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord God almighty, we confess unto Thee that we are sinful and weak creatures, and that because of this our senses and discernment are dulled. Yet we praise and thank Thee for the sending of Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts whereby we are given the gift of discernment by means of Thy gracious and wise Word. O Lord, we admit to Thee that very often we are left speechless and are filled with fear about many current events, for they confuse us, they are dark and hard to discern. Yet, we implore Thee of Father in heaven, to endow us with a full measure of Thy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of righteousness and faith, the Spirit of courage and hope. Keep us falling victim to those who seek our overthrow, but by Thy Word and Spirit protect our faith, guard the truth, and guide us into all wisdom that no matter the outward circumstances each one of us may be secure in Thy care and Thy wisdom. O Lord forgive us for our apathy, forgive us for any deceptions we may lingering under, forgive us for all our sins. Do not allow us to put away the wisdom of Thy Word from us, but ever hold fast to it as the greatest treasure. We pray these things, O Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn about discerning the time:

1. **When you see these things.** We read verses fifty one through fifty six of our text: **read verses here.** Whenever we desire to put into a true context of any event which we might experience, or when we are attempting to decide if an action of ours would be in line with the will of God, as we have seen, can only truly be determined from the Word of God. However, our inquiry into the wisdom of God and seeking God’s will cannot be done from a biased perspective. For example if we want to know the will of God concerning taking a job or quitting a job, or starting a business, etc. we should not do so having already decided to do it, and then searching for Bible passages that seem to support our action. Rather, we should honestly look to the Word of God and allow Him to tell the truth to us. In so doing we might well find that our plan is against God’s will and so we have no choice, at least according to our faith, to abandon our plan. Now as to recent current events we have a difficult time sorting through them and coming to a proper conclusion about the context of our time. Yet our Lord is well aware of how dark our eyes are, and so He gives a clear and concise vision of the context of our time. He asks how we can discern the sky and the earth and yet not discern the time in which we live? But this question is rhetorical and is meant to point to the clarity of the Scriptures. When we see that there is division within families, within churches, and within society as a whole, then we can positively identify the truth of the context of our time. This same sermon is given in the Gospel of Matthew with additional detail let us turn to chapter 24 of that book reading verses 1-33: **read verses here.** Now it obvious that the things Jesus speaks of are signs of the end, and that each one can be shown conclusively to be occurring right now in our time. This means that every event, every decision w3e make in our lives, every action should be viewed from the perspective that we live in those very times right now. Today must be a day of caution for the Christian, for there are evils on the move right now attempting to convince us to put away from ourselves the gift of faith from our heart. Right now each of us must have the Spirit of discernment. We need to identify within our own hearts that Judgment Day is upon us. It is near even at the doors. Now I can tell you all day long, for years on end, that the end is near, that Christ’s coming is imminent, but unless a person takes that to heart and take it seriously it is nothing but words. But when we truly believe it and see the signs associated with the Last Day, then our whole outlook changes. We then begin to view life as simply a pilgrimage in an evil world, and all we do then is with heavenly life in mind. Now it is true that a Christian, no matter what, should live as becometh a Christian because his own Judgment Day could occur anytime, but in the context of our time we focus on the impending day of judgment. Thus when we see these things we should tie them to Scripture and see there fulfillment of those events leading up to judgment. Thus, discerning the time when we see these things:
2. **Then look up.** We read verses fifty one through fifty six of our text: **read verses here.** Jesus said on another occasion, which is the basis for our theme: *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads…So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand.” (Luke 21:28, 31)* What Jesus implies in our text, and directly says later on in Luke is that our expectation should be toward heaven and not toward earth or earthly things. An example of this would be found in the Old Testament, where Moses, though being raised by the royalty of Egypt chose to cease that life in favor of the God-pleasing life of leading the church of God. We hear in Hebrews: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” (Heb. 11:24-25)* The example of Moses is that of one whose expectation and the focus of his life is on the heavenly home, not on this life. Because if his only concern was what made him happy here on earth, then surely he would have chosen to live in the palace, and adopted the life of a royal, to indulge in whatever vice pleased him, and to despise the sufferable life of a Christian. Jesus says in our text that He did not come to make peace on earth, but rather division. The message of the Gospel is itself not divisive, but because of man’s sinfulness the result is division. There are many who choose to live in sin rather than to sacrifice this life in favor of the life to come, and this causes division. Whatever the reason, whether it be fear, envy, greed, lust, etc. that guides these men, it will as a matter of course, cause division between those who serve Christ and those who serve the world. This is why false doctrine divides, why impenitent sin divides, why there is division and schism all over the earth. The primary reason is Jesus Christ Himself. The very existence of Christian people is a witness against those who reject the Gospel. We look up and look for a better country, a better home, and the world wonders why we don’t run with them into sin and vice. We see, then that Scripture guides us in discerning the time, when we see these things, then we are to look up for:
3. **Your redemption draweth nigh.** We read verses fifty one through fifty six of our text: **read verses here.** Jesus’ words in our text are primarily referring to the people of His own day being unable, because they lacked the guidance of the Spirit through faith, to discern the time in which they lived. They failed to discern Him as the Messiah promised for so long, they refused to believe, they vehemently attached Him, and eventually crucified Him. Now the same words apply to us in our day. We don’t want to be found among those that fail to discern the time in which we live. It is imperative to discern that we live in the Last Days, and live like it. It is true, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that being Christians puts shackles on us during our earthly lives, at least according to our flesh. But that is not a bad thing. It is not wrong to sacrifice earthly happiness for heavenly bliss, or in other words to lay not up treasure for ourselves on earth, but lay up treasure in heaven. Let us discern the time in which we live, and since we do indeed see these things begin to come to pass, let us look up and lift up our heads, for our redemption surely draweth nigh. Amen.