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“Time and Eternity Brought Together In Jesus”
Text: Mark 13:1-13; Hebrews 10:11-25; Daniel 12:1-3

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Holy Gospel we heard today, Peter, James, John, and Andrew were concerned. They had just heard some bad news from Jesus, that the magnificent Jerusalem Temple was going to be turned into a heap of rubble. ***There will not be one stone left upon another***, Jesus said. And they knew it could happen, because it had happened before. They learned it in history class, when some 550 years before, the Babylonian army had come in and leveled the Temple, Jerusalem, and its protective wall. And they then took with them everything they wanted, anything of value - people, animals, and things - and left behind a city and a people in ruins. Then after 70 years of being prisoners of war, the people were allowed to return and they began to rebuild. Later, King Herod (of all people!) also helped return the Temple to its glory. And now that it was, finally, Jesus says it's going to happen again. That's like us getting the news that another 9/11 is going to happen. And not just *might*, but *will*. So understandably they ask Jesus: *When? How will we know? What will be the sign?* They want to be ready.

But Jesus doesn't answer them. Instead, He says, that's just one thing; that's just ***the beginning of the birth pains***. There's going to be a lot more. Wars, disasters, persecutions. Deception, betrayals, hatred. It sounds like a description of what we heard from Daniel, that ***there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time***. Our world is never going to be heaven on earth. Sin and its corrosion, sin and its destruction, sin and its devastation - both in creation and in us - will see to that. And you've experienced it first hand: trials and troubles in your life, in your family. You see what's happening around the world, like in Paris, and to your friends and neighbors. And just when maybe it looks like things are coming around and getting better, it happens again. Satan and his army renews the attack, finds willing allies in sinful human nature, and lives and buildings and countries begin to crumble and turn to rubble.

Because of that, it's perhaps hard for the Church to gain traction in this world with our message of eternity and heavenly things at the end of the church year. Most people - you and me included - have enough trouble just trying to get through the day, or the week, or to the end of the year! It's hard sometimes even trying to think *that* far ahead, let alone to eternity. And so Jesus' return, the end of all things, the Last Day, eternity . . . most of the time it's not even on the radar.

There's an equal and opposite error though, too. And that's when the troubles of this world and life get us so down that we try to escape and ignore and avoid what is happening and focus *only* on the end - those are the kooks you see walking around with signs saying "The End in Near!" or selling all they have and going to the top of a mountain someplace.

Neither of those two ditches is a good place to be - forgetting about the future and focusing only on today, or forgetting about today and focusing only on the future. If only there was a way to balance the two; to bring time and eternity together; to be able to live with confidence both today and for the future. *Well, of course, there is.* And His name is Jesus.

For Jesus is the eternal Son of God who came and was born in time, as a man just like you and me. In Jesus, what is eternal breaks in to what is time bound *and transforms it*. A transformation so that we and our lives aren't just a matter of running the rat race here and then the end; of us constantly running on our hamster wheel and not getting anyplace, but just going round and round. With Jesus, our lives and what we do has an eternal value and purpose. With Jesus, we have a sure and certain future and a destination. With Jesus, we have confidence - *both* for the living of our lives now *and* that we will continue to live forever. A single reality of time, that the life we live now is the one we will live into eternity and is never going to end. Such a view - *such a faith* - means that both the present and the future matter.

And it's the reading from Hebrews that we heard today that brings these both together, and spells out for us what such a balanced and confident life looks like. That reading starts out with this: ***Every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.***

Now the first thing that's referring to is the Old Testament sacrifices that took place in the Temple. Those priests were to offer those sacrifices not just once, but every day, twice a day, morning and evening. And they had to be everyday because they could never completely take away sins. They were what was done in time in order to look to the future, when the once and for all, eternal, sacrifice that *would* take away sin would be offered. When, as the next sentence says, the Christ would come, when Jesus would come, and offer that sacrifice once in time and for all eternity.

And because Jesus now has come and fulfilled that priesthood, that service, that verse is now also referring to you and me. For we are now the priests - the priesthood of the baptized - who daily stand at our service and offer sacrifice. Offering not animals, but ourselves as *living* sacrifices (Romans 12:1). A service which still doesn't take away sins - *because it doesn't need to*. Jesus did that already on the cross. So our service, our priesthood, now, in time, comes *from* that eternal reality. The reality that now that the once and for all sacrifice has been offered in time, for all eternity, that Jesus has

conquered sin and death for us, that effects how we now live here in time. We have been set free from worrying about eternity, since Jesus took care of that for us, so now we can live for others. Today. We can lay down our lives for others and yet never lose our lives, for Jesus is always raising us to new life.

So what do such daily, repeated offerings and sacrifices look like? Quite ordinary, actually. Like going to work or to school everyday and being a good friend. Like helping our families everyday. Like serving our neighbor everyday. Like looking for opportunities to do good and to forgive and to show mercy everyday, day after day. And while unbelievers do those things, or many of those things, too, *the difference for us comes from Jesus*. Knowing that in serving our neighbor we are serving Jesus. Knowing that He is providing for our neighbor through us. That in Him, time and eternity come together and give our lives a meaning and purpose far beyond the here and now and what can be seen and felt. It's not that here and now is all there is, and it's *not* that here and now doesn't matter at all - it's that Jesus is using our here and now for us and for others, for an eternal good.

And that we have such confidence, the author goes on to explain. *Therefore, brothers*, he says, *since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus . . .* That's first another reference to the Temple, where the blood of animals was required to enter the holy places. But for us, now, we come into the presence of God by the blood of Jesus, shed for us. The blood shed in time, but for all time, for eternity.

And so, he goes on, with such confidence, *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith*. A *true heart*, coming before our Father in heaven, acknowledging the truth of our sin and sinfulness, our failure to live as we should, with this view of time and eternity, but *in full assurance of faith*, that in Jesus, that sin, our sin, all sin, is forgiven. For *our hearts* have been *sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*. In other words, we have been washed in time by the eternal blood of Jesus in the waters of baptism - the water than washes our bodies in time, but cleanses our hearts for eternity.

And so with this eternal assurance, now, in time, *let us consider how to* live now; *how to stir up one another to love and good works* - to live out our daily lives as living sacrifices in the confidence of our baptism. *And not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near*. Not neglecting to meet together here, at the altar, entering this holy place in time, to receive the once and for all, eternal sacrifice of Jesus in His Body and Blood. To receive the forgiveness we need and the strength we need, especially as the Day draws near. The Last Day. For as troubles and struggles increase in time, we need the eternal assurance and strength of Jesus; the confidence that we're not on our own, that it's not up to us, that He is working in us and for us and through us in time, for eternity. That when that Day comes, we will be counted among those *who endure to end and are saved*.

For how else can we be sure of that? That we will endure? On our own, with our own strength, we can't. But in Jesus, we can. For He did endure to the end, remaining faithful with every breath until His sacrifice on the cross was complete. And then victorious over sin and death in His resurrection, He lives forever that we do too. He lives to give that victory to us. He lives so that no matter how many wars, disasters, persecution, deception, betrayals, or hatred there are, we need ***not be anxious*** or worried, and we need not despair.

For like a child being pushed out of the womb, when the travail is over, there is joy and a life to live. Jesus said these will be the birth pains of the new life. But when they come to an end, there is joy and an *eternal* life for us to live.

So we live now, in time, in that confidence in the end. We know not when it will come - today, tomorrow, or many years from now. Jesus didn't tell them when then, and He hasn't told us when now. But neither does it matter. **Jesus has brought time and eternity together for us.** That's His gift for you. That when the last stone on earth is thrown down, when everything totters and finally crumbles, when the sun goes out, or that asteroid finally hits the earth, or the terrorists finally get their way and World War 3 incinerates the earth, when time ends, that will not be the end. That will just be when the eternal breaks into time once again, when Jesus comes again, and transforms it once again. And so it will not be the end for you, but in Jesus, in the eternal one, just the beginning of your life that has no end.

So how do you live now? Live in time, but live for eternity.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.