

Hebrews 10:11-25 - “Enduring to the End”

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We have reached the last two Sunday’s of the Church Year, which focus on the last days of life in this world. I recently received a phone call from a woman who had been encouraging me through emails and letters to attend an “inspirational” seminar on the Last Day. Since she was not a robo caller, and began her conversation as if she knew me, she was able to keep me on the phone a little longer than the usual scammer. She asked me if I was aware of how some of the twelve stars of the devil’s harlot in Revelation matched some of the people in our government and world today? Basically she was telling me that the seminar she was promoting would encourage me to pack my bags for the end is upon us; or should I say unpack all my earthly belongings and give them to the organization she was working for so that they scam others as well.

I let her know that the things taking place in our world today don’t alarm me since Jesus has already given me a packed bag overflowing with His promises through my faith in His salvation, which makes me ready for the end of the world today, if that’s the Lord’s will, and the continuation of my life with God in paradise. But that wasn’t enough for this smooth talking seller of twisted Bible teaching. So, after I planted some more Gospel seeds about God’s promises in Christ, I brought about the end to her call and prayed that God would cause those seeds to grow, untwisting the lies in her and those she worked for.

So, what are some of the untwisted truths about the Last Day, and will we “*ENDURE to the end*”—will we endure the troubles and temptations of this world caused by “*wars and rumors of wars*” or the general collapse of governments and society, “*earthquakes and famines*,” or the general breakdown of nature and our bodies, without rejecting the truth of what God’s Word says about the effects of our sins and our Savior? For, as Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading, only “*the one who endures to the end will be saved.*”

To enable us to endure to the end and be saved, Jesus tells us in John 15 to “*abide in me...in my love...in my word*” (see also John 6:56). So let’s do some abiding in the Word of God from Hebrews 10. The writer of Hebrews points out at the beginning of our text how the OT priestly service in the temple is fulfilled today through Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest, who comes to us today through His Word and Sacraments in the Divine Service, to create and sustain our saving faith in Him to life everlasting; to enable us to “*[endure] to the end.*”

But first He willingly, because of His love for us, offered “*for all time a single sacrifice for our sins*” through His death on the cross. Then He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where He “*sat down at the right hand of God*,” His Father. From this position of authority over all things in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18), including all the stuff that’s happening in our world today, He works to save us, especially through His Word and Sacraments—to perfect or make holy “*for all time those who are being sanctified.*”

Why do we, who have been made perfect or saints “*for all time*,” through Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins on the cross and our God given faith in Him, continue to need to be sanctified? Being made holy happens at a point in time, either at our Baptism or when we first believed, but after that we are in need of God’s continuous action in our lives to keep us holy.

Our new life in Christ works in many ways like the life we were born with, since God created them both. One of the ways we, on a daily basis, flush toxins (like carbon dioxide) from the body, while at the same time sustaining our life, is through breathing. With each breath we exhale harmful toxins, and inhale oxygen to sustain our lives. If you compare the toxins in us to the sins you and I commit every day, how does God enable us to get rid of the toxin of sin? Since Jesus went through hell to pay for all our sins, and rose from the dead to give us faith in this Good News, it's almost as easy for us to get rid of our sins as it is to exhale harmful toxins from our body and inhale oxygen. We repent of our sins (exhale), and inhale God's promise of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Jesus reminds us in the Lord's Prayer that this repentance and faith in His forgiveness is a daily "spiritual breathing" exercise, since we pray not only for daily bread but also for God to daily forgive us our trespasses.

That's also one of the reasons the Lord has gathered us here today, to repent or exhale our sins and inhale His forgiveness through His Word and the Lord's Supper. Our God given faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins is what gives us the "*confidence to enter*" such holy places, "*opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh...with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*" These words speak in part of our Baptism. And even though God has made us His children through our Baptism and/or faith in Him, we continue to rely on Him to wash us clean of the harmful toxins of sin which build up in our lives on a daily basis.

The Lord washed us clean of our sins again this morning through the confession of our sins at the beginning of the service, and His promise, which He Called me to speak in His stead, "*I forgive you all your sins.*" As a result of this Divine Service of God through His Word and Sacraments, God frees us from our worries and all fearmongers about the end of this world; He enables us to endure all the things this world throws at us right up to the end; He enables us to wait in eager expectation for that glorious day when we will see our Savior face to face; and God enables us to do the things that He has called us to do as His saved people, namely to "*confess our hope*"—to proclaim the Good News of His salvation to all people.

One of the most visible and effective ways we confess the Good News of our salvation through Jesus Christ is by "*meeting together*" as we are doing today, not in hiding but in bold faith, to continue to receive God's gifts for our salvation, thus encouraging others to do the same. God wants each one of you to know that your presence here today is just as important as my presence, as we together pray for one another and all people, proclaim His Word through the liturgy and hymns, and learn through our conversations how we can help each other with all our needs, "*and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*"

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] What happens when we eat a vitamin like this vitamin C. It circulates throughout our bodies to help our bodies fight off germs that make us sick. At the same time it nourishes and strengthens our bodies.

Something similar happens every time we hear the Good News of God's love for us, which He showed us most clearly when the Son of God willingly became a man in Jesus Christ so that He could fight off the germs of our sins, death, and the devil, and then rise from the dead and be here today to give us eternal life with Him.

So keep on taking your vitamins and eating good food, but most important keep on reading the Bible, through which our eternal vitamin C, Christ Jesus, strengthens and keeps us with Him now and forever. [Give out vitamin C's and John 3:16 booklets.]