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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
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Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, our gospel reading today from the Gospel of Luke...

Our gospel reading today depicts Jesus as the prophet.

“Jesus the Prophet.”

And that is a designation for Jesus about which we don’t often talk.

We talk about Jesus as the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary.

We talk about Jesus as the Word made Flesh—Jesus as God’s Incarnate Word.

We talk about Jesus as the Miracle Worker, the one who changes water into wine, the one who multiplies loaves and fishes.

We talk about Jesus as the Healer, the one who heals the blind and the lame, the one who restores health to lepers.

We talk about Jesus as the Teacher, the one who used parables to explain the kingdom of heaven, the one who instructed many in the way of righteousness.

We talk about Jesus in these many ways, but very rarely do we speak of Jesus as the Prophet.

But that is exactly how Jesus is depicted in our gospel reading today from Luke.

Jesus is described here as a prophet.

Indeed Jesus predicts here in Luke the destruction of the Temple, “The days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

And this prophecy did in fact come true in the year 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the Holy Temple.

And the gospel writer Luke is believed to have written his gospel not long after the destruction of the Temple, say 15 years, so that the destruction of the Temple was still very fresh in the minds of Luke's audience.

So the fact that Jesus' prediction comes to fruition, no doubt added credibility to who Jesus was—the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord.

PAUSE

And Jesus here in Luke, also predicts horrific events like wars and insurrections, great earthquakes, famines, and plagues.

And yes, there were subsequent wars, and earthquakes, famines and plagues, on the heels of Jesus' prediction.

And so, again it would lend credibility to Jesus as a prophet.

But, the truth is there have always been such horrible events in history.

In ancient times, well before Jesus, many-a-prophet predicted doom and gloom, and many-a-prophet was proven right.

To be sure, one can almost be certain that at some point in the future, bad things are going to take place, so it is easier to say, "Watch out, doom and gloom is coming."

It is easier to predict doom and gloom, than saying, "All the world will be at peace from now on."

Peace often didn't play out, and any prophet prophesying such a vision, would be discounted, would be discredited.

Those prophets would be seen as false prophets because their prophecies didn't hold water.

And that is why we don't have prophets in the Bible who shared happy news.

We only have the witness of prophets who preached bad news, because inevitably doom and gloom would follow, and the people of the ancient world would say, "Say, didn't such and such a prophet predict this?"

And the ancients would record that prophet's words for posterity, because that prophet had proven to be a true prophet.

PAUSE

This is pretty much how the ancients determined true and false prophets, by looking at the prophets “after the fact,” whether their prophecies came true or not.

And so, in the moment, in the present, one could never be sure if a prophet was truly a prophet.

People would have to wait and see.

PAUSE

But what are we in our contemporary world to do with Jesus’ words in the gospel?

What importance does Jesus’ prophecy hold for us today?

PAUSE

For the most part, I don’t think we worry a lot about prophecies.

For the most part, we go about living our everyday lives and that is that.

Sure, we may pay attention some to election predictions.

But, with respect to predictions, prophecies about the end time, not so much.

We don’t worry about whether Christ’s coming could come this very day or in a year from now, or a thousand years from now...

Now, yes, perhaps, we have given the end time a little more thought lately, in the wake of nuclear powers flexing their muscles.

We might think a little more about it, given the current events happening in the world, which might be interpreted as forecasting the end.

But again, for the most part, we go about our everyday lives, and relegate those thoughts of the end time to the back burner.

After all, the early Church, 2000 years ago, was predicting that Christ’s return and the end of history was imminent.

That it would happen before those first generation Christians had passed away.

But as we can see, that didn't happen. The end of history didn't happen.

So, I think we have become somewhat complacent with respect to the prophecies about the end time.

Indeed we make our plans, plans for the future, hardly even thinking of the end time.

We make plans for retirement. We make plans for travel.
We make plans for our summer vacation.

We make plans our education, for our future employment, for having a family.

We make all these plans, which is all well and good, and in all our planning, even though we may forget that we are people of faith, who live in expectation and in anticipation of Christ's coming.

PAUSE

And so again, what are we to do with Jesus' prophecy here in Luke?

For the day is coming, so we hear. The time is near, we are told.

PAUSE

There is a word, of course, for all of this. The word is "advent." It is a word we use to speak of that season before Christmas.

The four Sundays before Christmas make up the Advent season.

But aside from the season that precedes Christmas, "advent" is a word that simply means "coming."

And we as Christian people always live then in a time of advent.

We always live in a time of anticipation and expectation, awaiting the coming of Jesus and the end time.

So, in truth, we live in one long protracted season of Advent, all of our lives.

Truly, we are meant to live all our existence, with our gaze out toward the horizon, looking for any sign of the coming Lord.

Not for a baby born in a manger—that is NOT what we look for.

We long and wait NOT for the Jesus of Bethlehem, surrounded by angels and wise men, shepherds and barn animals.

We long and wait NOT for the Jesus contained within the Christmas story.

This is NOT what we wait for.

We will get to that “Advent” soon enough, at the end of this month.

We will get to that “Advent” that leads into Christmas in short order.

No, we long and we wait NOT for the Jesus of the Christmas story, but for the Jesus who ushers in a New World Order.

PAUSE

But in truth the Advent of Christmas and the Advent we live everyday as Christian people waiting for the end time Jesus—these two Advents are not so very different.

Because in effect, what happens at Christmas, in which Jesus is born into the world, is not unlike the Advent of the End time, when Jesus’ New World Order in effect is Jesus born in us.

Let me say that again, the Advent of Christmas where Jesus is born into the world is one and the same really as the Advent of the End time, where Jesus is born in us.

The Christmas carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, says as much.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
 Descend to us, we pray;
 Cast out our sin, and enter in,
 Be born in us today.

God born TO us, is really God born IN us.

That is Advent. God coming at the End Time is God coming to be embodied, or born in us, as the carol says.

Another word to keep in mind then is the word “THEOTOKOS.”

It is the word that is used to describe the Holy Mother Mary.

She is THEOTOKOS, which means God-bearer.

But, Mary is not the only one who bears God.

Yes, she was the only Mother of God. But we, as people of faith, are to bear God also in our very being.

That is Advent. God coming to be embodied in us.

Indeed, Christianity is a religion that is steeped in this idea of God in us.

Perhaps, it is no coincidence then that we hear that the Temple is predicted by Jesus to be destroyed.

For Christians then will come to talk about the Temple that is our body, where the Spirit of God dwells in each of us.

We, each of us, is the new Temple. And that is just another way of saying, Jesus is born in us.

And so, maybe, JUST MAYBE, the reason why Jesus hasn't come yet, why the end time hasn't dawned yet, why Christ's prophecy is still yet to be fulfilled, is because we have been looking in the wrong place.

Instead of looking out at the horizon for the coming Lord, maybe we need to be looking at ourselves as a human family such as to ask ourselves if we are living as God's people who embody Christ.

When we see the political divisions that exist among people...

When we see the socio-economic inequality that fractures society...

When we see that war still rages in the world...

When we see indifference to pain and suffering around us...

When we see people who fear and even hate other people because they are different...

When we see these things, we recognize that there is a lot of work to do before Christ will be revealed, before God's kingdom will come.

But, unfortunately, I think we have been led to believe that Jesus is like some superhero, who will come and fix it all.

It is like all those popular movies in recent years, where various superheroes come on the scene and conquer the evil forces threatening the world.

And I can't help but think such movies are a disservice to us.

Such that we even make politicians into superheroes, such that we think if our man or our woman is elected he or she is going to set everything straight.

Even Jesus knew this falsehood, "Beware you are not led astray, for many will come and say, 'I am he. I am the superhero you need to follow.'"

No, God is in us. Jesus comes to be born in us. We are the superheroes. We are THEOTOKOS, if you want a cool name for a superhero. We are THEOTOKOS. We are the god-bearers.

I conclude then with a quote we no doubt have heard before, but may have forgotten who said it.

But it was Mahatma Gandhi who so wisely said, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

"Be the change you want to see in the world."

Be the change, because if we can heal the divisions between people, if we can mend the fractures in society, if we can bring greater equality among persons, and if we can fight for peace at all costs, well then, the other side of the prophecy of Jesus will come to fruition, such that the New Temple will be truly revealed, the Temple of God's Spirit in us.

And the New World Order will be revealed, that New Order that is the love of God embodied in all people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.