

SERMON - THE 25TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 9 NOVEMBER 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Matthew 24:30 (KJV)

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

We seem these days to have a lot of fascination with “the End Times.” I remember at the time of Desert Storm there was a lot of talk and speculation that if we invaded Iraq that would trigger Armageddon.

We didn't at that time and we never found out if it would have. It didn't when we finally decided to.

Then we have the “Left Behind” series of novel, of fiction, fiction both from a literary sense and a theological sense.

To tell the truth we don't know what will happen exactly but from all indications it won't be pretty. What we do know is that Jesus is coming back, the great and terrible Advent.

Jesus himself tells us that. ***Matthew 24:21 (KJV)*** *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Christians from the beginning have been concerned, have been talking about the return of our Lord and we don't know anymore about it now than we did some two thousand years ago.

We don't any more about the second coming of Christ than we do about life after death, about where we go or what happens when we die.

And we get so concerned about these kind of matters that we miss the real picture. To

use the great trite expression we are missing the forest for the trees.

But it sure has made a lot of money for Tim LeHaye and Jerry Jenkins.

It is not that we should not be concerned about our Lord's return. It is not that we should not be concerned about our fate after our death. But whatever happens to us then depends on what we do now.... Not then. Then is too late.

It is not that we shouldn't keep those things in our mind, after all Saint Benedict reminds us that we should live in fear of judgment day and that we should have a great horror of hell.

That is not bad advice. Remember *Proverbs 9:10 (KJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

We should be more concerned with how we are living now than what kind of excuses that we will try to give when the end comes.

The Collect for today prays to God that Jesus who was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us sons of God and heirs of eternal life; that God would grant us, who having that hope in Christ, would purify ourselves for His return.

That doesn't tell us to spend our time on what will be but rather to get ready for it when it does come. And come it will.

We hear in *Matthew 6:33-34 (KJV) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

We are to live in the today the right now, not in the future. We are to live our lives as if

there will be no tomorrow and that we only have this day to get it right with God.

We are to live our lives not concerning ourselves with matters that we cannot control but rather in love and charity with each other.

We are to live our lives in purity.

St. John, our Patron Saint, wrote as we heard this morning, **1 John 3:2-3 (KJV)**

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

³And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

And he goes on to say, **1 John 3:6 (KJV)** *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

We are to live as Christ would have us live. We are to live as Christ. We are to live in Christ and have Christ live in us.

That is what we are to do, not to get caught up in a lot of what may happen that is no more significant than to know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

Amen.