

Last after Pentecost- 2018

The Great Tribulation.^{*}15^a “When you see the desolating abomination^{*} spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),16then those in Judea must flee^{*} to the mountains,17^{*} ^h a person on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house,18a person in the field must not return to get his cloak.19Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days.20^{*} Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the sabbath,21^{*} ⁱ for at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be.22And if those days had not been shortened, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect they will be shortened.23^j If anyone says to you then, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.24False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect.25Behold, I have told it to you beforehand.26So if they say to you, ‘He is in the desert,’ do not go out there; if they say, ‘He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.^{*}27^k For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.28Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures [eagles] will gather.

The Coming of the Son of Man.29^{*} ^l “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30^m And then the sign of the Son of Man^{*} will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the

☒To comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.

This is what I think as we hear Jesus proclaim the prophecy of the Great Tribulation.

Let us first afflict the comfortable. I do so because I spend most of my time in denial. I go about my day as if my comfort, my duties, my mission were the universe, that all revolves around me. Now just in case my friends out there say, “Oh, no dear deacon, you don’t act so selfish,” may I say that I wish it were so. While I sometimes try not to be selfish, much of my selflessness is the good behavior modification instilled by my mother and father who raised four boys not to be little pagans running amuck in the world. Much of it has to do with “getting along”. But how much of that is wishing your good before my own interests?

It is the self-sacrifice of Jesus to which we aspire, the one who loved us so much that we withheld nothing from us, even onto the cross.

Yet, while I am comfortable with my life, my family and my parish, it would be easy for me to be lulled into a sort of self-satisfaction, as if all of this was somehow my doing because of my intelligence, my diligence and my caring. That is why today’s prophecy is so important for someone like me.

The day is coming, and it is not far. It will be desolating... such as has not been seen since the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send out his angels* with a trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. *The Lesson of the Fig Tree.**³²“Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near.³³In the same way, when you see all these things, know that he is near, at the gates.³⁴Amen, I say to you, this generation* will not pass away until all these things have taken place.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

beginning of the world. It will be quick like lightning. There will be scant time to flee to safety. It will be final.

This prophecy concerns all of creation, the heavens, the sun, the moon and the stars.

People will be alerted and they will seek safety, not knowing where to turn and maybe even turning to false prophets who offer security, but not the grace of Jesus' promise.

It would be difficult, to say the least, to quickly find the path if one had not practiced in their life time looking for the path, discovering that Jesus is the way and the truth, and that by his grace, we come to accept the salvation wrought by the cross.

If I was comfortable before, I may be shaken out of that comfort and gaze upon Jesus for my salvation.

Doing so, may I have no further need for anxiety. When I am enfolded by Jesus' saving arms, may I be able to direct all my thoughts and passion by God's will.

You see, the great prophecy presents us consolation. Eagles will gather at the desolation, a sign from heaven.

30^m And then the sign of the Son of Man* will appear in heaven, and

all the tribes of the earth will
mourn, and they will see the Son
of Man coming upon the
clouds of heaven with power and
great glory.³¹ And he will send
out his angels* with a trumpet
blast, and they will gather his elect
from the four winds, from one end
of the heavens to the other.

May we be shaken out of our self-
centeredness. In humility, may
we come to his altar, receive his
grace and be filled with the
comfort of his consolation.

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