

# CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

2353 Rice Boulevard, Houston, TX 77005-2696 [ctk@ctkelc.org](mailto:ctk@ctkelc.org) [ctkelc.org](http://ctkelc.org)  
713-523-2864 Telephone

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

November 16, 2025

Malachi 4:1-2a; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

*In nomine Jesu!*

*Ripped from the headlines!* That's the way Jesus sounds with his words about "not one stone left upon another," and "wars and insurrections" and "nation rising against nation" and "famine and plagues" and "dreadful portents." Whether we like it or not, today's headlines and the words of Jesus in today's Gospel are not only "in sync," but they also describe what we now understand to be our "normal" life.

That this is "normal" is particularly painful for us to accept because for generations we've lived as if these headlines, and more importantly, these words of Jesus, describe somebody else's life, not ours. It's particularly painful to hear these words because we remember that it's not always been like this. It's hard to accept that the way things are right now is the way things might be for the rest of our lives. When I think about this being "normal" for my granddaughter, or any of our children, youth, and families, I'm saddened; in fact, I'm downright angry.

For a long time now – for virtually all thus far of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – it seems to me that underlying everything we say and do and think and read and even dream these days, there is fear; and that fear, like a Jack-in-the-box, is always ready to pop out. Everything appears part of a repeating pattern. Something happens somewhere, or is reported to have happened, or is rumored to have happened, and our first response is "we aren't sure, but..." followed by a reaction, then a lull, then the cycle begins again.

If all the information we have is *ripped from the headlines*, that is, based on our experience, on "evidence," or rumor, we will always be on edge and we will always react in anger, frustration, and fear, and that, my friends, will continue to take a terrible toll.

That's why we have the Gospel! That's why God continually pours into us the Holy Spirit! Because led by the Spirit and informed by the Gospel, we have other information, more than experience, or evidence or rumor can ever be! We have the information of faith, what Christ's Church has always called the Word of God.

Now part of the Word of God is indeed *ripped from the headlines*; and we don't need the Bible to hear it. It is a word that threatens. It is a word that evokes fear because it connects us unambiguously to death. "Wars and insurrections," "earthquakes, famines," plagues, arrests, bombings – we hear them and we fear them as harbingers of death, and we treat them as the ultimate last word. We Lutherans identify the Word of God as Judgment and Promise, Law and Gospel, and that means we identify all the above as judgment and law. And if that is all the information we have, the only thing we can do is be afraid; be very afraid.

But we have other information, and that other information is this: God promises always to come to us; and in Jesus, God keeps that promise. In Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, God came to us. In Jesus' sending of the Holy Spirit, God comes to us. As we hear the Word, wash in baptism's waters, are nourished by this Meal, as we are forgiven, and encouraged, and strengthened by the whole community of the faithful on earth and in heaven, God comes to us and promises never to allow fear or terror or death to be the last word.

God's shorthand response to all we call "normal;" to "wars and insurrections, earthquakes, famines and plagues" is this: "Do not be terrified!" "Not a hair of your head will perish! By your endurance you will gain your souls."

That is the information of faith we need to live freely and hopefully in this and any "normal" time of life. And while there are many sources of information *ripped from the headlines* to scare us to death, there is only one sure place to hear and experience the information that equips us for living, and that is wherever the community of God's faithful around the Word and the Sacraments of God. Here God comes to free us! Here we learn how to live in freedom and in hope! Here we discover what it really means to be faithful and to live unafraid! That's why, without discrimination or limitation, God gives us Christ's Church. And that is the

message we must carry to a jittery, a shaken nation, and a woefully imbalance world: “Do not be terrified! By your endurance you will gain your souls!”

Amandus J. Derr

Interim Senior Pastor