

Daniel 7:9-14, II Timothy 4:1-8  
“The day of judgment”

This Sunday we gather to first and foremost speak to the power and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of our lives events take place that shape our lives and even at times shape our understanding of our faith. Sometimes those events strengthen our faith, while at other times our faith is shaken to its very core. They force us to rethink what is the core, the foundation of our lives. What in our life is unshakeable, not subject to attack. What in our lives is unchanging, unfading. During those times we all feel vulnerable, but hopefully we also feel the need to refocus and find our true foundation. In those times we can turn to Psalm 46 and take comfort and find a sense of security and rootedness in the words: God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

This Sunday for the Apostles' Creed we hear the phrase that from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Paul in II Timothy helps us to recognize that at any moment an account of our lives could be required. At any moment Jesus Christ the one who sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty could come to judge the quick and the dead.

**READ**

These verses I traditionally read at funeral services because they are some of the most hope-filled words in Scripture for a Christian. Paul writes these words near the end of his life while he is in jail. He knows that his days are very limited and numbered, so really this is a reflection on his life, his legacy if you will. How wonderful it would be to look back on your life and say in essence I have done all that I could possibly do for the cause of Christ. This is what Paul is looking back on, basically his legacy that he will leave behind.

Paul's reflection begins with good news. He states that Jesus Christ is the one who is to judge the living and the dead. First of all when we state in the Apostle's Creed the quick and the dead, the word quick is another way of saying living. It really has nothing to do with footspeed. There is not going to be a foot race when we get to heaven and those who are quick are in and those who are slow, well, sorry. Paul is saying here that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the one who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified

dead and buried, the one who experienced what we did so who knows us completely is going to be the one who judges us.

This is good news. Just think our judge could have been the one mentioned in Daniel chapter 7, the ancient of days who sits on a fiery throne, has white hair, and fire comes from his presence. If we had a choice, we would certainly choose our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Apostles' Creed mentions from thence, he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Where is from thence? Remember last week that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From that position of power, of rule and authority he will judge.

This is how Paul begins his final farewell speech. He goes on to make his main point and that is listen, no matter what the circumstance, proclaim the message, preach the gospel. Part of our responsibility as we look to judgment day is to let others know the Good News. Do you believe that you have some answers that you would be willing to share with those who are looking for stability in their lives? Do you believe that if your friends came to this church then they just might find some hope that they current don't have? Every single member of 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian ought to be able to tell a hurting friend that Jesus Christ has seen your hurt, and has seen us through some difficult times and that I know that he will be able to see you through your difficult times. That is proclaiming the message.

We are living in a time that God has provided us with people who are desperately searching for truth that will set them free. Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life. People, now more than ever are aware of their mortality. We don't have to go far to see that this is true. This week alone we have had two of our members lose their fathers. We have had a member of our church walk out of her house and tragically she was struck by a car and is now hanging on to live in critical condition in the trauma unit. If we are going through it as a family, then those around us are as well. People now more than ever are open to our words and acts of love on behalf of Christ. IF we miss this opportunity we will be sinning in the eyes of God.

Paul certainly felt that as he stated in I Corinthians 9:16, woe to me if I do not preach. Lack of convenience does not diminish the necessity of preaching. So often we feel that people need to be at the right moment in their lives to hear the gospel, as if they

can choose when God will pierce their hearts with the Gospel message. But a doctor does not let the patient choose when to excise the cancerous, life-threatening tumor. Rather it is done immediately. 9-11 provided an environment within this nation that Paul would have demanded that we proclaim the message incessantly.

Paul states that times will come when people will be tired of sound doctrine and will have itchy ears for that which is appealing. We find ourselves smack dab in that time as people base their beliefs and their doctrine on experience as opposed to the Word of God. God is not going to judge us on our doctrine. But Paul tells us what a waste it is to follow the convenience of culture and its wave as opposed to the freeing power of the Gospel that come judgment day will be revealed as the Word of God.

Paul goes on to state that the time of his departure had come. How many of you know when you are going to die? The literal translation for departure in the Greek is break camp or pack up your tent. We never know when we too will be called into eternity. Each of us needs to face our own spiritual need and commit ourselves to God and His will now.

Paul was able to say that he had not lived a luke-warm life for Christ. Paul was able to say that he hadn't gone about his life half-heartedly. His had been a ceaseless battle, a race from start to finish. If today judgment were to come, could we say that we have lived our lives fully devoted to Christ and Christ's work through the body of Christ?

So many when they hear the term judgment day become fearful because they envision the fiery throne. They see the gavel, but miss the manger. But Scripture tells us that Jesus is the one who is going to meet us. We should not be afraid but rather as Paul states we should be longing for his appearance. We also hear that perfect love in Christ Jesus casts out all fear. If you are afraid of that day of judgment then you are not assured of your salvation. If Jesus Christ is your foundation, then salvation is assured. As Presbyterians we believe that you cannot lose your salvation, nothing can separate you from God for those who trust in him.

Acts 17:30-31 states: While God overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Our way of life has been changed, but it was first changed 2000 years ago. Now our American way of life continues to change and that makes some of us unsettled and unsure of what the future will hold. For some of us that way of life seems to be more important than our way of life with our Savior, which ultimately will be the decisive factor on judgment day. Hopefully we realize that because of that change our fabric is not made of the material things around us, but rather at the core of a Christian is freedom, freedom in Christ.

Have we finished the race strong, but more importantly than all of it, have we kept the faith. Nothing else matters on judgment day. Amen.