

“Here Comes the Judge!”

The Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, the 3 historic Christian creeds that St. John’s subscribes to as being faithful summaries of Scripture, each contain a statement like this: **“Jesus Christ will return to judge both the living and the dead.”** Leading up to our sermon lesson for today Jesus was being judged unfairly for healing a man on the Sabbath Day and making the claim that the things he had been doing were the Heavenly Father’s work. Jesus answers their criticism by taking the opportunity to remind them about Judgment Day and who really is the perfect Judge of all. John 5:19-30.

**<sup>19</sup> Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. <sup>21</sup> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.**

**<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.**

**<sup>25</sup> I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.**

**<sup>28</sup> “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. <sup>30</sup> By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.**

There are many different things we could focus on in this section of Scripture, but for today let’s focus on this verse: **“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son”** (John 5:22). From 1968-1973 the comedy show “Laugh In” was one of the most popular shows on television. One of Laugh In’s most famous sketches was “Here Comes the Judge” starring Sammy Davis Jr. While funny, it portrayed the judge as someone not to be taken seriously. In our sermon lesson Jesus is saying, “Here Comes the Judge,” but I wonder how many people take that promise seriously. Scripture teaches us that **“people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). Based on what John 5 tells us Jesus is the one who meets with everyone who dies and judges them to Heaven or Hell. How many people take that seriously? Of course many people will still be alive when Jesus returns, but they too will get their turn in Jesus courtroom. **“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left”** (Matthew 25:31-33). How many people take that seriously? Various sections of Scripture describe what eternal punishment in Hell is like. 2400 years ago the prophet Malachi described it this way, **“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a**

**furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,' says the LORD Almighty"** (Malachi 4:1). How many people take Hell seriously? As I reflect upon what I see happening in the world it is quite obvious that many do not take Judgment Day seriously. My fear is that Christians, like us, don't take Judgment Day very seriously. We might say we take it seriously, but do our priorities, does our urgency for supporting and carrying out Gospel ministry, and does our behavior make a clear confession that we take Judgment Day seriously? So as we enjoy the changing colors of Fall and prepare for the cold of Winter, the tradition of the Christian Church is to take a moment to remember that Judgment Day is a real Day and, as far as we can tell, ALL the signs are in place for Jesus to return TODAY! Here comes, Jesus, the Judge! Christians, let us not get lulled to sleep like people did in Noah's time before the flood. **"Long ago by God's word...the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people"** (2 Peter 3:5,7).

Here comes Jesus, the Judge! Each of us should take that seriously, but that statement doesn't need to make us afraid **"because those who have done good will...live"** in Heaven for eternity (John 5:29). But what good have you and I done? By human standards, some, but by God's standard – not enough. In God's perfect courtroom each of us has done evil and deserves to be condemned forever in Hell. Even though that is true for each of us, God wants us to take this seriously as well. **"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him"** (Hebrews 9:28). Your day in court already happened when Jesus suffered and died on the cross. And through faith in Jesus you enjoy the blessings of his court appearance on your behalf, so that when you personally have your day in Jesus court, on the day of your death or the last day of the world, you can be 100% confident that salvation is coming your way, that you will hear these words from Judge Jesus: **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world"** (Matthew 25:34).

Here comes Jesus, the Judge! Let's take that seriously not just when Fall hits and winter is almost upon us. Let's take that seriously not just when earthly health issues and other problems befall us. Let's take this seriously every day of our lives. **"So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and...let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Thessalonians 5:6,8-9). Amen.