

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“This too shall pass.” Have you ever heard that statement before? It’s considered to be an ancient proverb, a wise saying, possibly even attributed to King Solomon. It’s been the focus, even the title of many songs. Do you know what it means, “this too shall pass”? Whatever’s going on in your life, it’s not going to be that way forever. If you’re going through a bad break-up, it’s going to end. If it seems your family is experiencing more than its fair share of problems, there’ll come a day when it won’t be like that. If it looks like nothing in life is every going your way, that will change.

This too shall pass. You know, those words are a fitting them for the church season we’re in right now, the End Times. Last week, with Last Judgment Sunday, we were assured this world will meet its end. You and I and every other person will meet our end, which for us will be a relief and a joy like no other. Now this morning, Saints Triumphant Sunday, a beautiful reminder again this life isn’t all there is, because for us, it ends in triumph!

This too shall pass. For those of you who’ve read Daniel, or maybe know some of the accounts in Daniel, wouldn’t you agree that this could be a good theme for the book? The constant reminder that no matter how terrible this life may get, it will end. It will pass.

Like Daniel in the lions’ den, thrown to his seeming death because he faithfully prayed to God, and his confidence was in the Lord, who would either protect him or bring him home. The same mindset for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three men thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to an idol. They would only worship their God. So that furnace? If God wanted to rescue them, he would, and he did. But if not, they knew they would join him in a better place.

This too shall pass. For the second half of Daniel, those words are just as applicable. You see, the second half focuses on Daniel’s visions, apocalyptic visions, pictures of the end of the world. Very similar in nature to the book of Revelation, with its pictures and symbols, all pointing to this one fact. The ends times, they will be hard, scary, difficult, but they will end.

For us, they will end in victory. In his very last chapter, Daniel tells us why. He says, “At that time...” That’s a phrase which always refers to the end times, actually to the end of the end times.

At that time Michael will arise. You know who Michael is, don’t you? The book of Jude calls him an archangel. Revelation tells us he’s the commander of God’s armies of angels. And this is what he’s doing right now. He is protecting God’s people. He’s one the fulfillments of God’s promise to us, that “he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.” He’s protecting you and me during these end times, during this time of distress, protecting us from the schemes of Satan and all his agents.

We know what that time of distress is. Jesus warned about it throughout his ministry. He’s told us to watch out because “nations will rise up nation...kingdom against kingdom...there will be famines and earthquakes....you will be handed over to be persecuted....you will be hated by all nations because of

[Jesus]...false Christs and false prophets will appear...to deceive the elect." We know these distresses because we see them right now.

But this too shall pass. We have our final deliverance to look forward to. And until that time, we have God's angels, namely, Michael, protecting us, protecting all of God's people from these dangers, defending us in this spiritual war

Now, perhaps you've heard someone describe this world as a madhouse. Not too difficult to see why. But, actually, the world is not a madhouse. It's an arena, a battlefield where a war is constantly raging between the forces of God and the forces of those who oppose God. There is not a single area of life that has not been claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan and his henchmen.

And you and I find ourselves right in the thick of it. That's because the war is over us. The war is over our souls. The war is over our eternity. In this war, believers often talk about the church, that's God's full family of believers as being either church militant or the church triumphant. Do you know which of those you are?

Well, the church triumphant are exactly what their name describes. They are believers who have triumphed in the ultimate victory. They are believers who are now in heaven. You and I, we are the church militant. Believers who are still in the battle. We are those who are still fighting against our spiritual enemies. We are those who are still living in this tumultuous world.

And just like in any other battle, this life is not a cakewalk for the church militant, for us. I mean, we are so close to that final victory, can almost taste the riches of eternal glory. But we're not there yet.

No, we are still stuck in this distress, this world full of sin and temptation and evil and immorality and wickedness and corruption, and in these last days, there is no slowing down. The temptations of technology, the internet and social media, making it so much easier to fall prey to sinful lusts of your flesh or to broadcast your hateful thoughts or inappropriate speech for so many others to see.

A society which continues to blur the line between right and wrongs, so that what God deems to be immoral now today has become acceptable, even celebrated. And we're pressured, every day, to conform to that way of thinking, because if we don't, well then, we're the enemies.

And then, worst of all, your own sinful nature, and its subtle attacks, "Oh, come on, you can get away with doing that. God can't possibly get angry at you for doing something as little as that." Or, "Do it, because you can always ask for forgiveness later. God's not coming back any time soon."

In these end times, if you and I let up for one second, if we think we're one hundred percent safe and secure, that no matter what you do in this life, you can't be lost, you can't be defeated, beware. Because Satan will attack you, and know this...he is able to defeat you. You see, the Bible says, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."

One day soon, everyone will face a resurrection. Not everyone will face a good one. Some will wake up to everlasting life. But those who spent their earthly lives evading God will experience a different fate in

the great resurrection of the Last Day. They will hear God say, "Very well, you wanted to be without me; now be without me – forever!" And they will be sentenced to perpetual divorce from God – a never-ending existence of "shame and everlasting contempt."

This idea goes down hard for many people who think God wouldn't do anything worse to a person than a slap on the wrist. But the same God who at the time of Noah threw oceans of water over the mountain tops, drowning a whole world of screaming people, the same God who once scorched Sodom and Gomorrah in a hurricane of fire, the same God who fed wicked Queen Jezebel to the dogs – that same God still reigns in heaven.

He will return. He will punish wickedness, unbelief, a life of love for this world instead of a life of love to God. He will punish that with the eternal shame of hell. And if you and I live our lives like that, like the rest of the world, we will wake up to that same, sad reality.

And yet, be completely one hundred percent sure you are secure because you are safe in the arms of our Savior. He is our fortress!

Now, we may not be the church triumphant yet, but all of the church triumphant were at one time just like you and me. At one time, they were the church militant, fighting the same battles we are. And yet, today, on Saints Triumphant Sunday, God gives us the assurance we will win. He gives us the assurance we are saints, just like those who have gone before us.

An assurance that carries us throughout this life of sin because it has its basis in the only sure thing in our lives. The fact of the gospel that Jesus lived, Jesus died, and Jesus rose.

Jesus was the only one who never fell prey to the attacks of Satan and his evil henchmen. He was perfect. But he died. Jesus became sin for us on the cross. He took all of our sins and suffered the punishment, the shame of hell in our place, so we will never have to. And Jesus rose. That was the ultimate triumph, that not even death and the grave could defeat Jesus. His resurrection was our salvation. His resurrection was a foretaste of the resurrection to eternal glory we will all experience at the end of this because Jesus lived, died, and rose to save us.

And now, Jesus is the reason you and I keep fighting in this life, why we remain the church militant. We fight because we have an end goal to look forward to. We weather the attacks of all our evil foes because heaven is waiting for us. We keep our eyes fixed on the greatest reward with complete assurance, one hundred percent certainty because our names are written in the book of heaven.

That's the same book Daniel writes about in our verses. And since our names are written there, we will be delivered. Jesus tells us in Revelation, "He who overcomes will...be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life."

Jesus will keep us safe until we join the throngs of the church triumphant, celebrating the full spoils of the war won by the blood of Christ, eating at the wedding feast of the Lamb, singing praises day after day to our triumphant King!

Until that time, we are still God's ground troops in this battle, in this time of distress. And what Daniel writes in the last verse of our sermon text is what our charge from God is while we are here on this earth: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."

You and I, we are wise. As Paul writes to Timothy, we have been made "wise for salvation." We have been "saved" and have "come to a knowledge of the truth," the truth of the gospel.

And now, we shine. We are beacons of light, beacons of Christ to those who are caught in distress. By what we say, by what we do, we show our Savior to those who so desperately need to be saved. You and I, we are God's instruments, used by him to preach, to teach, to lead others to the righteousness Christ has already won, the righteousness Christ reveals through the gospel, able to make them wise for salvation as well.

This too shall pass. A wonderful encouragement to us to persevere through this world of sin because it's all going to end someday. It's going to end in something better for us, eternal life in heaven with the rest of the church triumphant.

But for now, we are the militant, fighting in this world of sin, but protected by Christ, by Michael, by the rest of the angels. And best of all, we are already triumphant because of Christ. Because of Christ, we are the saints triumphant. And so we will shine so God may lead many more to righteousness and to eternal life. And there we will rejoice forever. Amen.