



WITTENBERG WAY

November 2023



AMEN! COME LORD JESUS

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Dear Grace Family,

We are wrapping up the long Trinity season this month, and thus we are coming to the end of another "church" year in the life of our parish. During November the lectionary readings draw our focus on *the* end - the end of this world as we know it in anticipation of our Lord's return and the recreation of a "new" heavens and earth. Unfortunately, there's a lot of confusion on this topic, and strange enough, San Diego is one of the epicenters of this eschatological ignorance thanks to a popular TV evangelist and end-time preacher named David Jeremiah. I recently saw a commercial on television promoting his new book, *The Great Disappearance: 31 Ways to Be Rapture Ready*, where people are just going about their average day and all of a sudden some folks just start vanishing to show that they had been "raptured" away, leaving the unbelieving world behind. David Jeremiah represents a large swath of popular evangelicalism known as dispensationalism.

The subject is too vast to cover and critique in a simple "pastor's page," but I thought I might confront some of Dr. Jeremiah's false teaching by providing you with some Biblical insight on this topic and shorten the list of things you need to be concerned about regarding Christ's return. We'll be covering more of this in-depth during our mid-week study on Revelation. Suffice to say, every generation has been convinced that they are living in the last days. And they were right, though probably not in the way they thought. Likewise, if you believe you are living in the last days, you too are right, but perhaps not in the way you suppose. The Greek word for "last" is *eschatos*, the word from which we get "eschatology" (the doctrine of last things). That word is joined to the Greek word for "days" in two different ways.

First, often the "last days" refer to the very last period of world history. For example, Paul describes the time right before the Lord's coming when he writes, "In the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money," etc. (2 Tim. 3:1). Second, sometimes the "last days" refers to what we might call "the reign of the Messiah before His return," or, more simply, the New Testament era. In this sense, the church has been living in the last days (i.e. the past 2000+ years). For instance, Hebrews begins, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these *last days* he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). In his Pentecost sermon, Peter quotes Joel as being fulfilled with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit: "in the *last days* it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" (Acts 2:17).

Therefore, we can summarize that the "last days" can refer: (1) to all the days after the resurrection of Christ, and (2) to the final period before His return.

So, are we living in the "last days?" According to the first sense, yes we are. Christians have been living in the last days since Jesus was born, lived, died, rose again, and ascended to take his place on the throne as King of kings. To live in the kingdom of the Messiah is to live in the last days.

But what about the second sense of "last days?" Are we living immediately before the second coming of Christ? Nobody knows. And if someone says they know, don't trust them. They're either lying, delusion, or confused. I can confidently say this because Jesus was the one who told us His heavenly Father is the only one who knows when this will occur (Matt 24:36). Rather, the encouragement we are given in the Scriptures is to live every day as if it will be the day when Christ returns. Because it very well may be.

Regarding Christ's return, we are told: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:16-17). Period. Christ will return as promised, the living and the dead shall rise to meet him. The picture is that of a city going out to greet her returning King. He will establish the new heaven and earth joined together with Christ reigning over all. Thus, the very idea of a supposed hidden "rapture" where Christ secretly beams Christians up to heaven, while leaving the unbelieving world behind in a seven-year-tribulation period is completely foreign to the New Testament and to Church theology prior to the mid-1800s when such nonsense started to become a cottage industry selling millions of books and tracts. The passage I just quoted includes a loud archangel's call and the sound of the trumpet of God. Hardly secret. It's a very public worldwide event.

Instead of thirty-one things to be "ready" for Christ's return, let me just give you one that is at the heart of the Gospel that Paul proclaimed: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). That's it, because when our Lord said from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He meant it. Nothing more to be done. Simply trust that it is so for you. Live in light of that promise, and we all will happily be reunited on *the* last day. Until then we pray, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

Expectantly Yours,



Pr. Thomas



WHAT IS A “HYMN”?

The word “hymn” comes from a Greek word which means “song of praise.” Webster’s Dictionary tells us that a hymn is “a song of praise especially in honor of God.” In the Church, we sing hymns because they are God’s Word put to music. What an awesome way to praise our Lord!

Why do we sing hymns?

During the early years of the Christian Church, its music came from the Psalms. As new people came into the Church, they added new hymns. The Church’s hymns have stood the test of time, never failing God’s people as generations change. When we sing hymns, we are praising God with the words He has already put on our tongues! There is no better way to pray, praise, and give thanks to God than with the words He has given us.



Parents:

In order to answer questions as to why we do what we do as Lutherans, including utilizing the hymnody, read the introduction on page viii in the Lutheran Service Book. Here you will find a brief summary of what Lutheran worship and hymnody are all about.

PASTOR RECOMMENDS

Great Courses Presents

LUTHER: LAW, GOSPEL, AND REFORMATION

by Phillip Cary, PhD

Pastor Thomas believes this is one of the best introductions you can find on Martin Luther!

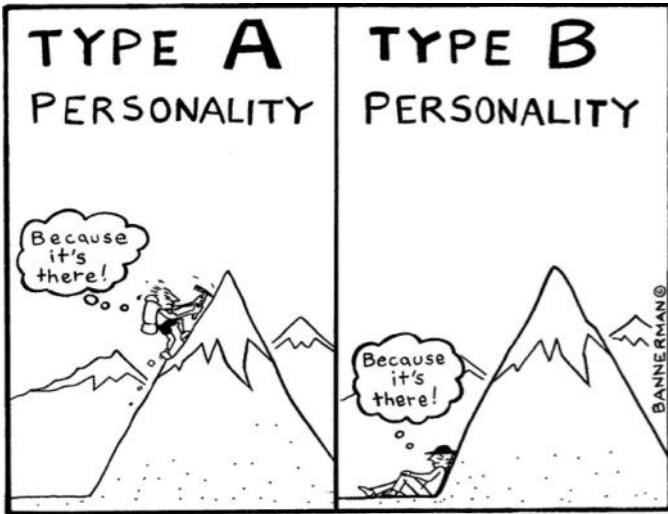


He was only one man—a humble monk and Bible professor—yet he sparked a religious rebellion that changed the course of history. Who was Martin Luther? What made his theology so explosive in 16th-century Europe? Was it really his intention to start Protestantism, and with it a new church? How did this late-medieval man launch the Protestant Reformation and help create the modern world as we know it? And how should we think of him: hero or heretic, rebel or tormented soul?

Martin Luther is so interesting to study, Professor Phillip Cary believes, because he is so controversial. In fact, Luther may be more interesting to study today because the controversy surrounding him is more complicated—less black-and-white—than when he was alive.

If you'd like to access this course, you can find it at:

<https://www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/luther-gospel-law-and-reformation>



Of all the personality types we throw around these days, none is more ubiquitous than the Type-A vs Type-B dichotomy. Drop your Enneagram number into casual conversation and only a few folks will have a frame of reference. Myers Briggs code, perhaps a couple more. But describe another person as a “real Type-A” and odds are, you won’t need to extrapolate. That person is a go-getter. Driven, high-energy, assertive. Not what you’d call ‘chill.’

Like the other personality types in question, the Type-A vs Type-B thing is more of a useful shorthand than, well, anything real. No one is strictly one thing and not another. God wasn’t sorting people into two (or nine!) personality buckets at creation.

The A-B distinction was coined in the mid-1970s by two cardiologists, Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman, to characterize those on their operating tables. So-called ‘Alphas’ tended to have more stressful lives, leading to a greater risk of heart disease. More laid-back ‘Betas’ went easier on their arteries. The distinction was an anecdotal one and hasn’t really held up to scientific scrutiny. Not that that has ever stopped something from entering our vernacular!

Certainly, we live in a Type-A culture, in which this distinction has taken on a moral dimension. Entrepreneurs, not poets, are our heroes these days. “Stop waiting — start living” we are told. And technology allows us to make such slogans a reality. Just hang out in a cardiologist’s waiting room these days. No one is idle. God forbid.

The message is clear: activity is better than passivity. Passive Type-B-ness is akin to incompetence, resignation, and non-seriousness. You only live once so you better get after it. Never stop grinding. Hustle, hustle, hustle.

This brings us to this week’s example of something you will only ever hear at church: **“Blessed Are the Type-B’s.”** Think of it as a variation on “don’t just do something, sit there!”

For our text, take Jesus’s healing of the paralytic in Mark 2. Psychologist Frank Lake wrote this about the passage:

[The paralytic] had been condemned by his illness to a passivity that overcame his contradictory and self-destructive drives. Thus the paralytic was lowered, like a dead body into a grave. The priest, Jesus himself, is waiting for the ‘corpse,’ not at the graveside, but at the bottom of it ...

The point of the story is best sustained if we regard the paralytic as one who contributed nothing whatever of himself to the cure. The healing person of Christ was working with the faith of the four friends, not of the man himself.

When it comes to the spiritual life, passivity trumps activity (and nervous breakdowns are welcome). In fact, your endless activity may be a problem when it comes to experiencing healing, goodness, and God. The less you bring to the table, the better. Faith often looks a whole lot like patience — AKA waiting AKA not ‘doing’ anything.

In the preface to his commentary on Galatians, Martin Luther drew things out further. He lists a few different forms of ‘active righteousness’ — civil, cultural, ethical — before subordinating them all to that which the paralytic encounters. No less than Tim Keller translated Luther’s words thusly:

There is another righteousness, far above the others, which Paul calls “the righteousness of faith” — Christian righteousness. God imputes it to us apart from our works — in other words, it is *passive* righteousness, as the others are *active*. For we *do* nothing for it, and we *give* nothing for it. We only receive it.

This “passive” righteousness is a mystery that the world cannot understand. Indeed, Christians never completely understand it themselves and thus do not take advantage of it when they are troubled and tempted. So we have to constantly teach it, repeat it, and work it out in practice. Anyone who does not understand this righteousness or cherish it in the heart and conscience will continually be buffeted by fears and depression. ***Nothing gives peace like this passive righteousness.***

BLESSED ARE THE TYPE-B'S

For human beings by nature, when they get near either danger or death itself, will of necessity examine their own worthiness. We defend ourselves before all threats by recounting our good deeds and moral efforts. We become obsessed with our *active* righteousness and are terrified by its imperfections. But the real evil is that we trust our own power to be righteous and will not lift up our eyes to see what Christ has done *for* us. [...]

So the troubled conscience has no cure for its desperation and feeling of unworthiness unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by *grace*, offered free of charge in Jesus Christ, which is this passive or Christian righteousness ... If I tried to fulfill the law myself, I could not trust in what I had accomplished, neither could it stand up to the judgment of God. So ... *I rest only upon the righteousness of Christ ... which I do not produce but receive.*

I'm fairly certain that Robert Capon developed his notion of 'left-handed power' from Luther's bedrock above. Right-handed power is what Capon called straight-line power. Do this and get that result (technique!). It has many uses. Build a house, train a horse, fly to the moon.

But right-handed power doesn't do much for a broken heart, or an anxious mind, or a rebellious child. For those sorts of impasses, a different approach is required, namely, left-handed power, which Capon defines as **"paradoxical power: power that looks for all the world like weakness, intervention that seems indistinguishable from nonintervention."**

This sort of power is inescapable in a service of Christian worship, at least one where the cross lurks anywhere in sight. We come together to worship a man who prayed 'not my will but thine be done'. Who went silent before Pilate. Who did not hang himself on a cross but *was hung* there by those he came to save.

The voices we hear six days a week (from outside and in-) tell us that any good thing we get will be something we earn. It will be something we take. Blessed are the self-starters. But Christianity says the opposite: any good thing that you're going to get in life is going to be something you receive. Something that is given to you. The work of a Christian — to the extent it can be called 'work' — involves the emptying of one's hands to receive such gifts.

Spoiler alert: life will often empty them for you. It will make you into a passive agent, whether you like it or not.





Leo Fullam, Augie Lehman, Georgia Thompson, and an enthusiastic visitor tried their best to hold the cups with their arms outstretched.



The men of Grace tried their luck at the game. Carl Lehman held Augie and Daniel Fohey held weeks old, Selah. Rob Santiago and John Barber did their best, too.



The ladies did a great job with the beer mug competition. Mother and daughter competed with Erin Downey, Alma Fullam and Rachel Thomas.



Rachel Thomas and friend kicked up their heels to the Oktoberfest music from the Oompha band.



Everyone enjoyed the festivities with delicious food and desserts. Thanks to Daryl Svensson for the red cabbage and Gretchen Jordan for the homemade apple crisp.

**JOIN US FOR A VETERAN'S DAY POTLUCK
ON THE MESS DECK UPSTAIRS
AFTER THE 10:30 SERVICE
TODAY 11/12/23.**

**Be sure to see the display cabinet filled
with Military Memorabilia.
Many thanks to Harold Nichols for
coordinating the display.**

GIVE THANKS WITH A GRATEFUL HEART!

Our Father in heaven has claimed us as His own. By the shedding of His Son's blood, by His death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification, God the Father has received us back into His family. By water combined with His Word, promise and name, the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us. We belong to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is in us, and we are in Him. And being in Him, all things are ours. In Him, we are richly and abundantly blessed.

Our true treasure and wealth is that we belong to the most holy Trinity and everything that is His belongs also to us: righteousness, peace, eternal life. Even our temporal treasures are gifts from His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

We receive our treasures from Him, and thus, as good stewards of His varied grace, we manage them in such a way that they may be returned to Him. We bring them to Him, hallowed through prayers of thanksgiving and God's Holy Word, as a sacrifice. Thus all our possessions, as gifts from God, are also sacrifices to Him, from which we eat to nourish our bodies and share with our family, neighbors, and fellow Christians, with the poor and even our enemies, as holy things given by our holy God. His temporal gifts are blessings to and for us, and bring blessing upon us even as they are pressed into His service for His kingdom and the souls that receive them.

Thus we place all that we have into God's hands. He never fails to remember us and pours out the fullness of His promises upon us. We give thanks for all that He has done, is doing, and will continue to do. We give thanks by not taking for ourselves, but giving to all even as our heavenly Father has given to us.

As we prepare for Thanksgiving celebrations, may we all give thanks continually for all that we are and all that we have because of God's providential care. And may we be all the more diligent in bringing everything that we have received from God to Him, so that He may bless it and employ it for the good of all — even for us. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.

- LCMS Stewardship Ministry

GIVING TUESDAY



Nov. 28, 2023

A global day inspiring you to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity. If you would like to give something extra to Grace Lutheran you can do so at: <https://gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/giving>. There are special envelopes at the Welcome Desk if you would like to make a cash or check donation or you can follow the directions below for giving.

OCTOBER 2023 GIVING

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| October Actual Offerings | \$ 21,721 |
| October Budget | <u>\$ 24,700</u> |
| Shortfall | \$ 2,979 |
| YTD Actual | \$189,206 |
| YTD Budget | <u>\$217,360</u> |
| Shortfall | \$ 28,154 |

HOW TO GIVE

- Your offering envelopes or those in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code here
- Text the amount to 84321
- The Giving Page at gracesandiego.com
- Time and Talents





3967 Park Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92103
619.299.2890
gracesandiego.com

The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas
brianwilliamthomas@gmail.com

Director of Parish Music
Dale Sorenson
dalesorenson2@gmail.com

Church Secretary
Gretchen Jordan
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

Sunday Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Sunday School
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

JOHN HANSEN
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA
Treasurer

SHANNON CARREIRO
Secretary

HEATH RUSSERT
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT
Fellowship/Activities

JOHN BARBER
PHILIP HAWTHORNE
Members-at-Large

CARL LEHMAN
Education

TED NILSEN
Head Elder

JEREMY FULLAM
STEVE HOLLMAN
JASON HUNTLEY
DARYL NEWTON
Elders

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Dave, Bill, Phil, Edward, Mike, John, Rita, Grace, Jim, and Nancy

PRAYERS FOR THOSE EXPECTING A CHILD

Jeremy & Jessica Belgau and Carl & Elsie Lehman

PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

Rev. Tyler McMiller, Joshua Salas, Lorenzo Murrone, Luiz Lange,
Michael & Nance Morizio (Lutheran Church planters & seminarians in Italy),
Rev. Dr. John Bombaro, and Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss

PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY MEMBERS

Rev. Mario Ancira, John Campisi, Tajy George, Nathan Farish, Philip Hawthorne,
Matthew Morgan, Jeff and Jordan Gruetzmacher

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND

Joyce Rochester

BIRTHDAYS

NOVEMBER

11- Spencer Huntley
18- Gloria Himmelberger
30- Claire Latham
30- Harold Nichols
30- Nick Russert

If we missed your birthday, please
contact the church office at:
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AT GRACE

THANKSGIVING DAY SERVICE

NOV. 23RD AT 9:00 AM

GRACE ANNUAL MEETING

Nov. 26th at 9:15 am
Fellowship Hall

Vote on the 2024 budget
and new Council officers

GIVING TUESDAY

Nov. 28th

A global day inspiring you to give,
collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

If you would like to give something
extra to Grace Lutheran
you can do so at:

[https://gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/
giving.](https://gracesandiego.churchcenter.com/giving)

ADVENT DECORATING

SATURDAY, DEC. 2ND AT 9:00 AM

Everyone is welcome to join in
decorating the church for Christmas.
Breakfast goodies will be served.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

SUNDAY DEC. 3RD
AT 8:00 AND 10:30 AM

WEDNESDAY SOUP SUPPERS

DEC. 6, 13, 20 AT 5:30 PM
FELLOWSHIP HALL

ADVENT MID-WEEK SERVICES

DEC. 6, 13, 20 AT 6:30 PM



CONNECT WITH US