

*Pentecost 25-November 14, 2021*

*Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish*

*Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25 and Mark 13:1-8*

*"Full Assurance" Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

*And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*

*Every scripture reading for today compares the uncertainty of placing our trust in other gods to the full assurance we have delivered to us by trusting in God alone. In the first reading for today, Michael gives only a glimpse or a fuzzy vision of what will be made clear when Jesus arrives. Michael, who is identified as a great prince, will protect God's people during times of anguish. Michael serves only as a temporary shield. He cannot deliver the full assurance that only will happen by having faith in Jesus Christ.*

*David, who wrote Psalm 16 which was the selected psalm for today, experienced firsthand what happened when he placed his trust in himself or other gods when he faced threats on his life. Trusting in himself or others may have temporarily shielded him from dangers, but when he fully trusted in God, God was faithful and delivered what he promised. David wrote this psalm from his own experience, but also wrote when he saw others after other gods. These people didn't have their troubles taken away, instead their troubles were but multiplied. David wrote this psalm for you and me so that we like him would not worry about attacks from the devil, but instead we would rest in the full assurance of deliverance that only Jesus can give by trusting him.*

*Then the author of Hebrews in the second lesson declares the difference of what happened in the house of God before Jesus and what it does after Jesus died for you on the cross. Before Jesus' death and resurrection, it seemed the priests didn't do anything much different than a short order cook in a cafe does. Day after day they went to work and made offerings which never could take away sins. They made sacrifices that may have made people feel better for a short time, but their sacrifices only temporarily covered the sins of the people. They were never satisfied, so the people had to return again and again to have their sins covered deeper by more offerings, but the sin remained simmering under the pile of burnt offerings.*

*The author of Hebrews then compares how the work of these priests daily making sacrifices comes to an end when Jesus arrives. Now that Jesus has made a single sacrifice for all your sins, you do not enter the house of God to have the priests make more sacrifices to cover more of the sins you have committed. Now you enter the house of the Lord with confidence knowing that Jesus has removed any separation between you and him by what he has done for you rather than by some sacrifice that will only have to be repeated over and over. Now we enter the house of God with an unwavering hope since he who has promised this full assurance is faithful.*

*Apparently, the people that first heard these words of the onetime sacrifice that Jesus made also jumped to the next conclusion that they could also shut the doors of the temple. But the final words from the author of Hebrews is the opposite is true. The writer reminds us that it should not become your habit to neglect meeting together, like some do, or else you will quickly soon believe that you can accomplish salvation through your goodness without the sacrifice of Jesus. The sacrifice that once had to be repeated has now become the good news that encourages you to enter God's house to hear again and again.*

*The disciples of Jesus had to be reminded of this good news as they were impressed with the sights of the big city. These country bumpkins were quickly distracted by the sights of the large buildings and away from Jesus who would soon do something far more impressive for them with his death on the cross. The disciples didn't want Jesus to miss out on the impressive view that they were taking in. While they were looking and oohing and ahing at what they saw, Jesus was silent. So, they excitedly told their teacher to look at the large stones and the large buildings! Jesus only responded by having his disciples take another look and then imagine the buildings as a pile of rocks.*

*These disciples wanted Jesus to give them some insider information. They wanted the answer to two questions. When will this happen? And secondly, what sign will be given to alert them when this would take place? Questions that begin with when or what never deliver answers of faith.*

*The disciples were walking with the answer to their faith. They were walking with THE "who" that would not simply be a sign like the ongoing sacrifices that the priests were doing in the temple. They were walking with Jesus who told them to beware of false teachers who would lead them astray by placing their trust in other gods that can never take away sins or deliver them from their fears to peace. Jesus was clear that not only would there be some who would attempt to lead them astray there would be many. And we know this is still true today that there are many who are distracting people from Jesus by looking at the wonders of this world.*

*Everyone believes or puts their trust in something, especially when we realize we are in trouble and cannot help ourselves. There is only one who has consistently been faithful throughout all time. From the very beginning when God created all things, he did so by speaking. His word has never failed. His word doesn't just have a pretty good track record. It is perfect. Many people make many promises. There is only one who whatever he promises is faithful. Jesus Christ has done for you once and for all what others have failed to do. This good news from Jesus gives you the full assurance no one else can deliver. Amen*