

Theme: Because of the Hope of Jesus Christ

Text: Acts 28:17 – 31

Date: November 20, 2016

Season: Last Sunday in the Church Year

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you prepare for Judgment day, from God our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Congratulations we have made it! We have made it to the last chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. We have made to the Last Sunday of the Church year of 2016. We have made it to the Last day in the church year when we remember how important it is to be ready for Judgment Day. So congratulation for you have made it with the help of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to the last day, which means there is a new beginning of a new life to coming.

So are you ready to stand with the Apostle Paul at his court appearance before Caesar and before the Caesars of our world? Are you ready to start a New Year, which is the beginning of the Advent Season and preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ? Are you ready to stand before the Throne of God to receive your Judgment of this life and for all eternity?

The Apostle Paul was ready to stand in the court of Caesar and defend his faith in Jesus Christ. But he had to wait two years for that day in Caesar's court and we are told, **'After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. [18] When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. [19] But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar— though I had no charge to bring against my nation. [20] For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain."**' (Acts 28:17 – 20)

It was because of the Hope of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul came to faith in God. It was because of the hope of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul became a leader in the church at Antioch and he was chosen to go on a missionary trip to the regions around Antioch. It was because of the hope of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul when on two more missionary journeys,

that enabled him to share that hope in Jesus Christ with others in cities from Antioch to Ephesus to Corinth and back to Jerusalem. It was because of the hope in Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul and 275 others made their way to Rome despite being lost in a horrible storm that destroyed their ship. It is because of the Hope of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul will share the good news of Jesus Christ with the people of Rome as he waits for two years to stand in the court of Caesar and then to be release as a free man to go on yet another missionary journey, not recorded in scriptures, but it is known that he traveled from Rome to Spain and then back to Crete, where he dropped of Titus to be a minister to the people in Crete. Then he traveled to Ephesus, where he dropped of Timothy, and then to Corinth and finally back to Rome where he was put into prison by Caesar for being a Christian and was behead in his death in around the year 67 AD.

Now if we look at our lives we also can say that it is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we to have made it this far in our lives. It is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we are here today to confess our sins and receive God's Word and sacraments for the strengthen our faith and knowledge of God and for the assurance of our hope in Jesus Christ. In fact, it is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we live the life that we now live in many ways and it is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we look forward to our last day here on this earth because it will bring us to that hope we have been given because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yes, you can say that it is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we have hope in our life and look forward with hope to a better life for all eternity in the home that Jesus Christ has prepared for us.

Yes, we may not travel to many different places like the Apostle Paul did to sharing the hope we have been given in Jesus Christ, but we to have been given opportunities in many ways to share our hope in Jesus Christ with our family, friends and neighbors as we live our lives in that hope given to us by God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we are given a peace that is beyond the world understand, even though there may be at times when disbelief and disagreement with some of those that we have share our hope in Jesus Christ with have caused us problems. We are told that this happened to the Apostle Paul many times and in Rome we hear this, **"When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them,**

testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. [24] And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. [25] And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: [26] 'Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. (Acts 28:23-26)

So are you ready to start a new year, that is a new church year which begins with the Advent season, where our focus is on looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ not only as the Christ child in this world to redeem us of all our sins, but in the second coming of Jesus Christ on that last day, Judgment day, to bring us home with Him for all eternity. Yes, the Advent season is a season of hope in Jesus Christ given to us because He came as a baby to live in our world to be that perfect redeemer for all our sins so that we could have the hope of being with Jesus Christ for all eternity in the heavenly home prepared for us. Jesus in His own words tells us why it is so important to have faith in the hope given to us by His life, death and resurrection as He speaks to the people mourning and lamenting over Him as He walks to His crucifixion on the Cross of Calvary and He says, "**Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. [29] For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' [30] Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' [31] For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"** (Luke 23:28-31)

Oh, we might not be ready for a New Year yet, but it is time to become stronger in our faith and in the hope given to us by Jesus Christ and to share that hope with others so that they may not have to face life without the hope given to us all in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So today we come to the last chapter in the Acts of the Apostles and we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is still working in the world to get the hope of Jesus out to all the world. Today we come to the Last Sunday of another Church year and we can look back at the past year and see how we have grown in our faith and our knowledge about our need to share our faith with others as the Holy Spirit works in our lives, just as He did in many people in the Acts of the Apostles. Yes, today we come to the Last Sunday and we are reminded of our need to

be ready to share our hope in Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit guides our lives in the coming New Year in preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ on that last day, Judgment day, when we will all stand in Judgment at the throne of God.

So are you ready to stand before God at His Throne in heaven? We are ready if we have hope in Jesus Christ in our lives. We are ready if we have let the Holy Spirit bring us to faith in Jesus Christ. We are ready as but our trust and faith in Jesus Christ in all that we do. For it is not what we have done in our lives that gets us ready to stand before God on Judgment day but the faith that God has worked in our lives through His Word and Sacraments, that gives us ready with the certain hope in all that Jesus Christ has done for us. It is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that makes our life difference as you come to that Judgment Day. For with our hope in Jesus Christ on that last day you will hear the words of God telling you. **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”** (Mt. 25:21) It is because of our hope in Jesus Christ that we have the assurance that when we stand before the throne of God we will be starting a new life in the perfect love of God for all eternity in our new heavenly home, because of what God has done for us in this life as He gave us faith in His love and trust in His Son’s gracious mercy given to us as the Holy Spirit worked in our lives through His Word and Sacraments. So, share the hope you have in Jesus Christ with others so that they to will be ready for the Last day and for the new life to come. Share the Hope you have in Jesus Christ by your words, actions and life. Amen.