

Third Sunday in End-Time; November 17, 2024
+ John 5:25-29 +
“Listen for Your Savior’s Voice”

“Amen, Amen, I tell you: A time is coming and is here now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out. Those who have done good will rise to live, but those who have practiced evil will rise to be condemned. And my judgement is just, for I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me.”

Listening is hard sometimes. There’s too much noise in the room. Or outside the room there are sirens and mufflerless Hondas.

And then sometimes it’s hard to listen not because there’s too much noise, but because there are too many voices. There are so many opinions, so many pieces of advice, that you can’t isolate and focus on just one. None of them can rise above the din in your own head.

We need to listen to the very first words Jesus speaks to us today: **“Amen, Amen, I tell you...”** Listen to a voice that tells you the truth, and always tells you the truth. Not only does Jesus tell you the truth, he tells the truth that calls you to life.

There are actually two deaths and two resurrections to deal with here. First there is a death that every human shares. Jesus’ voice calls to all people, because all people are conceived and born in sin, enemies of God and headed for eternal destruction. All people are born dead spiritually, and are in desperate of Jesus’ saving voice.

And only Jesus can call a person to spiritual life. There are so many voices that try to call over him and drown him out. So many voices that tell us there is no heaven, or that there are many ways to get to heaven, or that a loving God will take everyone except the very worst to heaven, so a good person like you has nothing to worry about. So many voices, but Jesus tells the truth. His voice tells us that he himself, by his own holy life and death on the cross, by his own resurrection, took away the sin in which we are born and the sin we have committed. He himself opened the gates of heaven. No other voice speaks this way, because no one else has done what Jesus has done.

Only his voice can call the spiritually dead to life. And that is exactly what he has done for you and me and all believers in him. By his saving voice in baptism’s waters, Jesus called you to life. He called you to believe, to rise from being dead in sin to being alive through faith in his redeeming work. Only the voice of your Savior could have done that for you – and he has.

So keep listening to your Savior’s voice. Because now he calls you to live for him.

His loving voice is your continuing source of life. As you live day to day, there are still many voices calling out to you: important, unimportant, loud, quiet. Some harmless. Some harmful: the voices that call you to find fulfillment in wealth and power and popularity, or in luxury. But none of these voices keep your

soul alive. Only the gospel call of Jesus does that. He still calls and gives you lasting life in himself, calming fears and bringing peace with God. He is your continuing source of life, because he himself is life.

And Jesus is still calling you to serve him as you live your life of faith. In these verses Jesus says that on the last day, those who have done good will rise to live forever. At first glance this seems to speak against the Bible's truth that only the work of Jesus Christ can save us. But look closely at what Jesus says: he does not say we will rise to life because of the good things we have done, he only says that those who believe will do them. We will serve God in all the ways that please him, because Jesus has called to us and given us life. A God-pleasing life full of good works is proof that Jesus has raised you to life. Keep listening to him, growing in faith, and growing in these works that please God.

As you listened when he raised you up in faith, as you keep listening as he continues to call to strengthen your faith and service, listen also for his call on the Last Day.

One thing that's safe to say about Judgment Day: it's going to be loud. Lots of noise. But no believer will miss Jesus' voice. He will call even those of his who are in the grave. And they will listen and come out! Because on that day Jesus' voice will no longer be raising people from spiritual death to life. Instead, his voice will be calling all people – believers and unbelievers – to judgment. This authority is his because the Father has given it to his Son. The Son took upon himself the work of redeeming all people, he offered the perfect sacrifice for sin, he earned salvation for all, and so he is the one with the authority to judge. And on that day, everyone – those who listened and rose in faith, and those who refused his saving call – will hear his call to rise and be judged.

It will be the worst day for those remained dead in unbelief and therefore did only evil in God's view. They will know they are without excuse and receive the judgement of condemnation. All of that will be very loud. Noisy indeed.

But believers will still listen eagerly, and hear his voice, because he will be calling us to rise to eternal life. Although you and I deserve to be counted among those who practiced evil, we will not be counted with them. We will be counted among those who did good, because Jesus raised us to the life of faith and made good works possible for us. Jesus will call through the noise and say, "Yes, that's you! In me, in that first resurrection when I raised you up in faith, your sin was removed and you were made holy. And so your works were pleasing to God, too.

What a day it will be when we hear the Savior's voice rising above all the noise! All those who heard the Savior's voice and were raised from death to life, will meet together with the Savior and listen to his voice say, "**Come, receive the inheritance prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.**" And then we will hear his voice tell of the good works we did in the life of faith – the good things so small in the world's eyes, and so big in his. And then the Church militant, the Church that has to fight through the noise and commotion of the world's voices, will be the Church triumphant, hearing only the voice of the Lamb and his choir of saints and angels.

There are so many voices clamoring for our attention. There is one voice that offers what is real and lasting. Jesus is the One who called your soul from death to life. He is the One who still calls you to believe, and to show your faith with your good works. And he is the One who will call you on the Last Day to rise again, to live with him and all the saints. So, above all other voices, listen for his. Listen for your Savior's voice. Amen.