

Jude 14-25

February 7, 2010 – 5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Pastor Mark A. Cordes

## Build Yourselves Up in Faith

† In view of God's Judgment (vv.14-19)

† Busy waiting for mercy (vv.20-25)

In the name of Jesus, our brother, dear family of God:

Anyone paying attention today might have a problem with the theme of this sermon: **Build Yourself Up in Faith** ? Wasn't Isaiah (6:1-8) terrified by God's holiness and his personal sin? In today's Gospel (Luke 5:1-11) didn't Peter ask Jesus to leave because of the net breaking, boat sinking miraculous catch of fish? Faith is not do-it-yourself. A live coal from God's throne cleansed Isaiah's sinful lips. The lips of our Lord spoke forgiveness to Peter that powered him to follow Jesus. Paul in our Second Lesson calls the Corinthians to grow up and speak to be understood. Showing off tongues of other languages or gibberish does no good unless an interpreter translates God's Word. That's the tool that does the work that builds God's temple in our hearts. With God's Word: **Build Yourselves Up in Faith...**

† In view of God's Judgment (vv.14-19)

Did you hear anything in the news this week about Judgment Day? Sometimes they call it *Armageddon* in the movies. But do you notice the recurring theme? Whether *Independence Day* or *Alien Resurrection*, some super force threatens humanity which coughs up its own hero to save the day. Everyone cooperates, works through catastrophic terror so human power and goodness can win. Sounds like an old message from a long lost garden: ***"You will not surely die....For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*** (Genesis 3:4f NIV) The serpent still tempts Adam's children: "Forget God's judgment. Save yourself. Be God!"

Many men have claimed to be God. Genghis Khan's Mongols swept across China and Central Asia. Where is he now? Dead. His horses and warriors have gone down to the grave. Ancient Jewish prophets speak of Babylonians and Egyptians lying down together in death. Within our lifetime Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong once in the news, now occupy the grave – gone down to judgment with God.

Only two men had no grave. Elijah went up to heaven in a fiery whirlwind chariot. The name of the other prophet appears early in the Biblical record: ***"Enoch walked with God 300 years....Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."*** (Genesis 5:21-24 NIV) The holy writer to the Hebrew Christians explains: ***"By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God."*** (Hebrews 11:5 NIV)

Jude, ***"a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James"*** (v.1) tells us about Enoch. This may have come from an apocryphal book well respected in Jesus' day. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, His holy writers could use material from other sources. Whether in this case, or by direct revelation, God the Holy Spirit put His stamp of approval on this information. This is certified, not by Microsoft or the State Department, but sure, certain, unassailable, by God through Enoch, ***"the seventh from Adam"***: ***"See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*** Does that ever describe you? Do you ever question God?

That man in the news after Hurricane Hugo who shook his fist at God, "We've had enough!" – God is coming for him. Charles Darwin denied God for letting his ten-year-old daughter Ann die of a painful stomach disorder like his? God is coming to convict him. I wish the stories of Darwin's repentance were true, but he died defiant. God knows and God will judge ***"all the harsh words ungodly"***

*sinner have spoken against him.*” Such people are all smiles when they want your money or your vote. They’re so nice until they have what they want. Then their expression clouds as they turn to smile on more worthy prey. *“They boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.”*

Don’t be hurt or offended, especially not at God. He warns us about our own sins and the sins of others. The Lord’s brother and servant Jude draws us into God’s counsel with winsome words: *“But you, dearly beloved, remember the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold: ‘In the last times...’* – right here between the first and second coming of Christ – *“...scoffers will follow their own ungodly desires.”* You will never convince them because facts don’t matter. *“These are the men who divide you...”* – whether by science, politics or doctrinal divisions they foment in church. They *“follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.”* It’s not that they’ve never heard the Gospel. Charles Darwin’s father was a pastor. Yet he steadfastly rejected efforts by loved ones to win him for Christ. God tries. His try people **In view of God’s Judgment**. Open your eyes. This is not time to sleep. Be...

### † **Busy waiting for mercy (vv.20-25)**

*“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith...”* You don’t need to select the tools. Instead of heading for Home Depot or Menards, just come to church. God provides all the nuts and bolts of faith, the love that glues your life together, the clamps that hold you safe and secure. It’s not your design. Consulting with the Master Builder costs not one minute on your cell phone, not a single byte for download. With or without words *“pray”* to God, held close *“in the Holy Spirit.”* He feels like your Grandpa or Grandma when they hear your voice. Commanding you to call, promising to listen, guaranteeing the best of everything – this is what God does to help you **Build Yourselves Up in Faith**.

No one can decide on his own to believe. The Bible says that by nature we are dead in sin. But God the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel and enlightens us with His gifts. With that same Gospel of forgiveness He sanctifies and keeps us in faith to the blessed joys of heaven. We’re like the little girl in England at the turn of the century. Wanting to join the church she was asked, “Are you still a sinner?” She answered with great wisdom, “Yes, but now I am a sinner running away from sin toward God.” Once God converts you by faith in Jesus, you joyfully serve, **Busy waiting for mercy**, gladly cooperating with the Holy Spirit. He’s working on you with the Word as you **Build Yourselves Up in Faith**.

But there is danger lurking. Like locking your door or wearing your seatbelt, you literally *“guard yourselves as God’s treasure in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”* God says, “Drive carefully. Follow my road map. Listen to my clear directions in Bible-GPS. I don’t need global positioning satellites. I see you every minute and my holy angels are constantly on guard to help and protect you. I want you safe home with me soon. For every sin of yours, for every stubborn rebellion my *mercy* is busy to bring you to God.”

We have work to do for God who *“mercied”* us so we can *“mercy”* fellow sinners around us. The ones who doubt? *“Be merciful”* to them. The ones with their feet feeling the heat of hell? *“Snatch them from the fire and save them.”* To everyone else, *“show mercy,”* but be careful. Their sin may be so toxic that it oozes from every pore like a viral infection gone wild. Don’t get wrapped up in their lives like putting on their coat or shoes. Hate the sin like a deadly virus in holy fear.

When you’re **Busy** ministering to your own soul and everyone around you, you get tired and discouraged. Imagine how our volunteer leaders feel when an icy parking lot needs sand, which then gets tracked inside. While we look for a better way, God is testing our love for Him and each other. With shovel and plow, broom and vacuum, we need to keep our eyes up – caring for each other, looking to God. Ultimately, to **Build Yourselves Up in Your Faith** begins and ends with God. *“To him who is able to guard you from falling and to stand you before the face of His glory without fault and with overwhelming joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all the ages, now and into all the eternities! Amen.”* (Some quotations TPA, literal.)

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