

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, August 25, 2013

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 32, 26:6, 427, 290, 53.

Lessons: Psalm 102:25-28, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:1-13.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 1:10-12

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow redeemed in Christ our Lord:

As we grow older and this sad world's history comes to its conclusion, the hymn writer expresses our thoughts in these words:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see.

O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!" (The Lutheran Hymnal 552:2)

Our text, which is a quote from our Old Testament lesson in Psalm 102, expresses some of these same thoughts. Psalm 102 refers to the Messiah. The writer to the Hebrews quotes it because he wants to prove that the Messiah, Jesus, is God, not a created being. He wants to show that Jesus is infinitely superior to angels and all created beings. This Savior Jesus Christ we need in these last days when everything is changing, when there are so many difficulties in life to contend with, when the end of all things draws near.

Let us learn, then, from our text:

THE UNCHANGEABLE SON OF GOD IS THE ANCHOR OF OUR SOUL.

- 1. The old heavens and the old earth perish, but**
- 2. Jesus remains the same to all eternity.**

The quotation from Psalm 102 in our text begins with these words: *"In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."* God's creation of this universe is taught in these words. In these days when the theories of evolution are being taught, and men become ever bolder to contradict what the Bible teaches, we need this assurance: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1) In the beginning, about 6,000 years ago, God laid the foundations of the earth. He created everything in and on the earth. The heavens with all the heavenly bodies are the work of God's hands. He made everything out of nothing by the power of his almighty Word, just as the psalmist writes: *"He spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."* (Psalm 33:9)

This is the teaching of Holy Scripture, and many are the proof passages for this teaching. In the days of Nehemiah, after the return from the 70-year exile in Babylonia, the Levites spoke of the creation in these words of praise to the Lord. *"Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you."* (Nehemiah 9:5-6)

The psalmist contrasts the idols of the heathen with the true God when he says: *"All the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens."* (Psalm 96:5) Again in another psalm we read: *"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men."* (Psalm 115:3-4)

The work of creation which the Bible teaches so clearly is ascribed to Jesus also. In fact, all three persons of the Trinity took part in the creation. But in our text the writer's purpose is to glorify Jesus as the Son of God, as true God above all created things. Earlier in this chapter the writer says: **"In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."** (Hebrews.1:2) Therefore, this almighty Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ, can certainly be the anchor of our soul. He is the one in whom we should put our trust in these last days when, as the poet says, "Change and decay in all around I see."

That is also expressed in our text in these words: **"They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed."** The heavens and the earth are thus described as a garment, a piece of clothing. Garments change; they don't always look new anymore. They wear out and get holes in them. So it is also with all material possessions we have. They fall to pieces. Things have to be discarded and replaced. When we think of all earthly things changing, we think of how the Lord changed the whole surface of this earth in the great flood in Noah's day. It caused such devastation, and such wonders as the Grand Canyon and the Badlands of the Dakotas were formed. Unfortunately, because of sin, the changes that take place in created things result in conditions on this earth getting worse, not better.

Finally, as our text says, **"they will perish."** God will bring it all to an end. Jesus says: **"Heaven and earth will pass away."** (Matthew 24:35a) Peter speaks of it as a warning to all: **"The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."** (2 Peter 3:10) Not only is this a warning of the Last Day coming suddenly without advance warning of just when it will happen, but this is also an admonition not to put our trust in earthly and material things as though they were our god. How foolish it is to put so much emphasis on material things, earthly possessions, when they will all perish! The world in its present, outward form will pass away. Then God will create all things new. The Book of Revelation says: **"Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them."** (Revelation 20:11) It also says: **"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."** (Revelation 21:1)

The Lord is not like the sinful world which passes away. We want to learn in particular that Jesus the Lord always remains the same to all eternity.

2.

Our text says: **"They will perish, but you remain."** Again it says: **"But you remain the same, and your years will never end."** Isaiah recorded similar words from the Lord long before Jesus was born: **"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever; my righteousness will never fail."** (Isaiah 51:6)

This is a comforting reminder that God never changes and the spiritual blessings we have from him remain always. What the Bible says of God as the unchangeable One is equally true of Jesus his Son. The Lord is eternal. He had Isaiah record these words of his: **"I, the Lord – with the first of them and with the last – I am he."** (Isaiah 41:4) He is the only eternal God. He says: **"Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior."** (Isaiah 43:10b-11) In the eternal God there is no change whatever. In the Book of Malachi, he says **"I the Lord do not change."** (Malachi 3:6) James speaks of that fact as a comfort to us, saying: **"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."** James 1:17

Now let us hear of additional blessings that come from the unchangeable Son of God. Firstly, his Word always remains the same. It abides even though all earthly things pass away. Jesus has promised: **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."** (Matthew 24:35) The psalmist says: **"Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."** (Psalm 119:89)

That means, then, that God's truth as recorded in his Word also remains as an eternal blessing. David in a psalm prays: **"Redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth."** (Psalm 31:5) Jesus says: **"I am ... the truth."** (John 14:6) Jesus testified before Pontius Pilate: **"For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to**

testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37) When we listen to Jesus, we learn the truth we need to know for our salvation. We learn the truth, first of all, of our sinful condition, and learn to confess with David: **"I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."** (Psalm 51:3-5) We learn from Jesus' Word this truth: **"You were dead in your transgressions and sins."** (Ephesians 2:1) Being dead in sins, we were absolutely powerless to do what pleases God and were totally unable to save ourselves by our own merits and works. Furthermore, by our sins we have deserved nothing but eternal damnation, **"for the wages of sin is death."** But Paul also says: **"the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 6:23) Thus when we listen to Jesus' Word, we also hear the truth of how we were saved in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul says: **"Just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous."** (Romans 5:19) That happened in this way that Jesus **"died for all,"** (2 Corinthian.5:15) and **"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."** (2 Corinthians.5:19) This precious truth of the Gospel, that God no longer counts our sins against us, but declares us righteous in his sight for Jesus' sake, - this truth remains as something we can always cling to.

Likewise, all the promises that Jesus makes in his Word are something to cling to. Jesus says: **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."** (John 11:25) Jesus promised us before he ascended into heaven: **"I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."** (John 14:2-3) While we are still here on earth, Jesus promises us his help in prayer: **"I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."** (John 16:23) In all our difficulties and tribulations and afflictions, Jesus' Word gives this promise: **"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."** (Romans 8:28)

Man makes many promises, but often fails to keep them. But Jesus is not like sinful man and he will keep all his promises to us. We are assured by the psalmist: **"Your faithfulness continues through all generations."** (Psalm 119:90a)

The Savior Jesus Christ, who gave us his Word of truth and all his precious promises, is the anchor of our soul. Through faith in him we are kept steadfast and immovable amid all the changes of this life, and we will be saved at last when all earthly things perish. Amen.

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