



In the Mix in 2026

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost  
16 November 2025

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Rev. Christian W. Marien

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen. I have no idea what my esteemed colleague is talking about, telling you that he gets all the difficult scripture readings to preach. I mean, come on – the time will come when not one stone will be left on another and the world as we know it will come falling down around us. False teachers will claim your attention. Wars and uprisings, but do not be frightened. Ummm, ok. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Great earthquakes, famines, and pestilence in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. And still we are not done! But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. Handing you over to be put in prison, all on account of the name of Jesus on your lips. And then Jesus says...But don't worry about it. Forget about it! I will give you words and wisdom that no one will be able to resist or contradict. Whoops wait! I forgot to tell you, that you will be betrayed by parents, brothers, and sisters, relatives and friends and just for fun some of you will be put to death. And then the icing on the cake – everyone will hate you! But, take hope, not a hair on your head will perish. Stand firm and win life! Or in other words...Hakuna Matata! No worries! #Comforting #Getmeoutahere.

In earlier days, when you would walk through the checkout line at the grocery store – you could get all your news about the coming end of days from the National Enquirer, The Sun, and The Star Tabloid Newspapers. Apparently, the only newspaper Elvis would talk to was the National Enquirer. That was how any God-fearing person could find out when the water was turning to blood in some corner of the world or a plague of frogs had overrun a village in some far-of place. Every-so-often someone would show up in my office and ask me if I heard about the coming of the end of the world. Let me tell you – it was always a surprise to me. And yet, parts of the world today, are not too far from what Jesus describes for the disciples as they stand inside the high walls of the temple. I would like to tell you that is the end – but my friends, take heart, it only gets worse. <sup>20</sup> “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. <sup>23</sup> How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. <sup>24</sup> They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. <sup>25</sup> “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. <sup>26</sup> People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And then Jesus says – but hold on...<sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” What a relief?! Or is it.

When asked what he would do if the world were to end tomorrow, Martin Luther once said, “I would plant an apple tree today.” The story has no historical proof, but it sounds like something Luther would have said, so we are going with it. Name your poison – your division, your anger, your fear – you can find almost all of it – almost anywhere – especially if you go looking for it. And yet, Luther wants to plant an apple tree. And perhaps so should we. Not to deny the challenges and difficulties of this world and our lives, but as followers of Jesus, our call is to seek the light not the dark – the truth not the falsehood. I know somewhere I have heard, “you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Even when knowing the truth means we must seek the light through the darkness.

And that my friends, brings us to this day. Here, at Ascension, the truth we claim is in the person and teaching of Jesus, the Christ. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, “let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith.” And that truth carries us each and every day. At Ascension, we know more love than apathy, more selflessness than selfishness, more joy than sorrow, more life than death. Each of us has known a Good Friday or two in our lives. Each of us have known a moment of resurrection joy in one mountaintop experience or another. It is the hope we hold on to – the promise that God makes to us, that we are never alone. The cross that hangs on the wall behind me, each of you in this community of believers, your pastors, even this very building testifies to that hope. But you need not trust my words alone - the proof of that hope is seen in every face that tells the story of the love of a Savior. Because this is Ascension: It's what we do... Amen.