

*Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 24, 2023
Let the Secret Loose
Romans 16:25-27*

Today we finally arrive at the Fourth and final Sunday in Advent! Today we anticipate the arrival of our God! Today we investigate the depths of His marvelous Word and ponder eternity with Him!

And just like a passenger disembarking on a cruise with the pre-launch debriefing, just like the soldier standing in formation on the battlefield right before the bullets start flying, and just like a new employee in their 1st day orientation...

...we listen to these words intently knowing that everything God says will have bearing our journey to our eternal future with Him.

And today the operative word is ETERNAL!

Now, reflect with me for just a moment, what in your life is truly eternal? I mean will it survive the melting of the planets unto the New Heavens and New Earth!

The world thinks eternity is just until death do us part. But that is but a moment in the blink of God's eyes. That never stopped the world attempting to establish their personal eternity, as if they were rich enough, political enough, and powerful enough to do so.

Having travelled to Asia, Central America, and all around North America, I have seen that the world has erected statues that have outlived entire kingdoms as a testimony to their eternal figures. Whether it is Buddha, the Presidents on Mount Rushmore and soon-to-be Crazy Horse, or the Lincoln Memorial, the Glorieta La Minerva in Guadalajara, and the Magnificent Monumento a la Patria in Merida Mexico. They stand as reminders of all that are held sacred, ever present, and never to be forgotten by the people that adore them in pilgrimages, photos, art, and by maintaining their pristine appearance. As eternal as it gets in this life.

But is any of it eternal at all?

Ozymandias, a poem written by Percy Shelley says,
I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: "Two cast and trunkless legs of Stone

Stand in the dessert[sic]. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, a sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive stamped on these lifeless things...

And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The stones and level sands stretch far away."

You have to imagine the power of this great and mighty King tens of thousands of years ago, because his monument to his eternal kingdom, is as unfamiliar as his name...to all of us today.

Truly nothing is eternal, on this side of heaven.

So, our letter to the church in Rome stands in contrast to this humanism in its opening exhortation, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages."

The *long ages* in that line is *time eternal*. And the revelation that God had for the world was an eternal secret from the people of this world who would seek to bring harm to those who would reveal it, so *their* humanist kingdom could reign instead of the eternal one in Christ.

It started in the garden with the crafty serpent attempting to establish his brood of viper's kingdom by leading Adam and Eve astray. It happened with the prophets of Ba'al who sought to murder the prophets of almighty Yahweh. It happened in Babylon when Daniel was thrown to the lions, and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were cast into the fiery furnace, with the hope that these faithful men of God would never speak of God's faithfulness to them.

It happened to the disciples and apostles with such vicious ferocity that John was compelled to write in code for the comfort of Christians, and the deceiving of those who would use the power of the Roman Empire to crucify every Christian who proclaimed Jesus risen from the dead, soon to return and take us to the New Heavens and the New Earth at the end of days.

It happened in the Reformation when even the erstwhile leaders *of the church* put the penalty of death on any reformer that proclaimed that Grace Alone, Faith Alone, and Scripture Alone was sufficient for the salvation of the sinner.

And it even happens today, in Africa and Asia, where people are hunted down and killed for their faith. It happens in Europe, where people are arrested for preaching the Gospel in the streets of London. It is coming soon to a beloved American Christian Community where laws are being enacted to prevent free speech to silence the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Temporal kingdoms proudly proclaiming their abominations hoping the secret of the eternal kingdom will not be revealed.

I don't know if you know it, but various online and You Tube Lutheran Podcasters are revealing the secret of God's Eternal Kingdom and directing many to our church. They have done nothing less than share what the truth of our wonderful Lutheran Doctrine is. People seeking the truth are listening to them and are directed here with a desire to join. Some even want to become Lutheran Pastors and serve in our parish vacancies.

As verse 26 says, what, "was revealed even through the prophetic writings according to the command of the eternal God unto the submission of faith..."

Convinced and subsequently convicted by the power of the Gospel and the certainty of the return of our Lord Jesus, people know God's secret and they want everyone to be ready with them for Jesus' return.

I don't know about y'all, but I know I am ready. I am ready to be done with the foolishness of this world. I have had it up-to-here with the truth being censored and lies being promoted to the financial benefit of those who seek to destroy the church. And, I have taken about all I can take for the foreseeable future.

But, when I see texts like this, I realize we were never supposed to bear these burdens. We were never supposed to save the world and make it a better place by controlling the politics and governance of our communities. We were never supposed to be taken seriously for the sake of what we know to be faithful and true. We were always the next step in a greater culture war that was won even before the first spiritual dart was ever fired by the evil one.

That's the real eternal secret. God has this! He crushed the Devil's head before we even knew there was an evil one prowling around looking for someone to devour. He already vanquished every kingdom that ever took His people hostage and already freed them before

they knew they would be slaves. He even raised us from the dead before we knew we were dying.

That's the secret. All that needed to be done was accomplished in the future as certain as already having been done.

And, so is the eternal reality that He is about to come. Not just about to come, but certain to come, and certain to be here before everyone who will know Him even believes in Him.

So, our mission is clear: tell everyone, let the secret loose. Because His children are already adopted for salvation, we simply need to find them and by the power of the Holy Spirit bring them in. AMEN

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