

Today, this day, 45 years ago, just right up the road. Faithful Lutherans were locked-out of their own church. The faithful Lutherans, desiring to still hold the Bible as God's holy Word, had lost by 1 vote when a new pastor was called, a man not approved to serve, who would soon lead the congregation out of the Missouri Synod. The faithful Lutherans had worked out an agreement to use the church building when it did not interfere with the 1 vote majority. But 45 years ago today, they showed-up, the locks were changed. What happened at St. Martin was wrong according to God's Word; the majority by 1 vote would soon join the ELCA denomination and the fight, the attempts for the faithful Lutherans to keep the church building, the congregation, they lost it all. Yet they continued to meet, amid struggles, that small, faithful congregation, the true group of what started in the area in 1908.

We cannot presume to know all the reasons God allows things. There is great caution to ascribe this or that by my thoughts, whether it is or isn't what God desires. But we can see here, what God promises to each of us, what man meant for evil, God uses for good. That 1 vote majority, wrong, contrary to God's Word, eventually resulted in... this place. The faithful Lutherans of St. Martin in 2008 merge with Emmaus and here we are, Risen Savior, where more people are gathering now, than in the entire history of Lutherans in this area. Risen Savior would not be here if 1 wrong voter in calling a rogue pastor had been different. And yet here we are by God's work, His grace alone. If not for one vote 45 years ago, in 2007 I might have been sent to be a pastor in Texas where I hear its warm and people there are really nice to pastors. Oh what could've been. The whole trajectory changed. If not for 1 vote, almost all of you probably would not be at little St. Martin church over there. We can gather here today on the 45th anniversary of the lock-out and say in this place, God have mercy on me a sinner; gather here to receive the treasure of His kingdom. Faithful, historical, true Lutherans which is nothing more than saying our desire to be faithful, historical, true Christians. Why would anyone who holds to God's Word, want it otherwise, last Sunday's epistle, **stand firm, hold to the traditions**. today, **walk in accord with what you receive**. As proper teaching, doctrine is minimized by man and our world, Jesus is not willing to settle even for a little error, a little point that's off, so why should you ever. Especially in view of our times and the end.

God works, so often beyond your understanding, there are many 1 vote items in your past, that change your whole trajectory, whether your grandparents, parents ever meet, how you may have not met your spouse, which neighborhood you live in, what school, what job you take, where you move, the people that come into your life. Each decision you make has inconceivable implications. Of who your children will marry. Your life is full of 1 vote, 1 decision happenings and yet here you are. God using all your decisions, even bad decisions, even evil in your life for good. How God will remain steadfast to you. He keeps His true Church

The end is upon us. The destruction of Jerusalem, Temple a warning. The end has begun. We live in the last days. We endure wars, violence, mass shootings, terrorism, all common. Natural disasters. Doctors kill babies in the name of "health care." Morality never been lower, people never crueller, the family never less important or valued. There's large scale apostasy. People falling away from the faith. The Church barely exists in Europe. It's happening here.

When you see these things take place, straighten up, raise your heads, your redemption is drawing near. Don't you ever despair. Jesus will return; even before that, when are you ever alone, or to fend for yourself?

Did you hear that promise? **But not a hair of your head will perish.** But his disciples were beaten, crucified, slaughtered...**but not a hair on your head will perish.** Do you see what is yours?

Behold the judgment, even Jerusalem, God's chosen city, destroyed in holy wrath because they refused to repent, and receive the Christ.

He was patient, merciful; see not only Jerusalem's fall but every war, disaster, tragedy, disease: a solemn warning: The end is coming. His mercy comes to an end. Do not abuse His grace. Repent. Don't think you'll escape wrath with excuses like, "I tried my best" "I'm not as bad as some" "I just did what I thought was right." Just ask Jerusalem how well those work. Instead, give up demanding others and God show you respect; give up your selfish whims, admit your corruption, failure, and countless bad votes you make... and know more and more of His forgiveness.

Your redemption is drawing near. Live your life as His baptized children should, His Name upon you, act like it. He attends to every little detail, every 1 vote decisions for your life. Each day, live as His: faithful, hold to His doctrine, remember His coming Day, live repentant, by grace. Encourage one another. have compassion on those around you.

Sin has taken its toll. Yet, He will use temptation, even war, divorce, evil, disaster around the globe or in your house -all the signs of the coming end- for your good. For by them He draws you closer to Him. He will teach you to rely upon Him. For you to see more of His love and care, to live in His forgiveness. Do not seek to understand His works, it may take 45 years to see it, but trust Him. Dare to hold God to His word for you.

Your redemption is drawing near. Rejoice: the end is coming. The Lord is coming back to claim His inheritance, claimed you, bring you home, reunite you with your loved ones in Christ, in perfect bliss. Raise your heads. Nothing to fear. Nothing will truly harm His people. You're never alone, His Church preserved, stands, where forgiveness and salvation come through Jesus merits. Raise your heads further: rejoice, **your redemption is drawing near**, upon the Altar, joined to you; no greater comfort, treasure, gift, promise for you until the end. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.