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Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart.  
We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your  
sermon or teaching lesson.  
I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau,  
here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.  
They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia  
Seminary, St. Louis.  
You can hear all about us in our introductory episode,  
but trust me, they're pretty good preachers.  
Alright, let's get started.  
Peter, where are we in the church year?

Peter: We are talking about the text for the 24th Sunday after  
Pentecost.  
The time, well, we're getting close to the end of the church  
year.  
Pentecost is a long season, but we're getting toward the end  
of it.

David: Yep, and it gets a little judgey.

Peter: It does. It does.

Jessica: David, what's the text for this week?

David: The texts are Amos 5, Psalm 70, 1 Thessalonians 4, and  
Matthew 25.

Jessica: Alright, as always, I ask each of you to tell me what you  
would preach on.  
Peter, will you go first?

Peter: Okay, I'm still looking at 1 Thessalonians,  
and specifically I want to think about the last couple of  
verses in the reading for this week.  
So maybe, Jessica, if you would read verses 16 to 18.

Jessica: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of  
command,  
with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the  
trumpet of God,  
and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up  
together with them in the clouds  
to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with  
the Lord.  
Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Peter: So this is talking about, you know, Paul.  
One of these kind of rare times when Paul describes kind of  
with some detail  
what's actually going to happen at the end.

David: It's nice because it's not like Revelation where there's so  
much going on.  
This is a little simpler.

Peter: This is easier to imagine.  
The Lord is coming back like he left, and apparently there's  
going to be a trumpet,  
and then a big resurrection, and then a big reunion.

But the part that I want to focus on is the last phrase in verse 17.  
We will always be with the Lord.  
As I was reading this text, that phrase, that promise, that future reality was very encouraging to me.  
We will always be with the Lord.  
And so what I'm thinking about is kind of a proverbial sermon, proverbial refrain structure where we will always be with the Lord would be kind of a refrain throughout the sermon, and that would kind of tie the whole thing together.  
And so it's that word of encouragement.  
I want this sermon to encourage my hearers, partially because nowadays it seems like the absence of the Lord seems to be pressing.  
It seems like God is not acting in certain ways. Things seem to be getting a little worse.  
And so this promise that we will be with the Lord, that he will be present with us, I want to emphasize that through this sermon.

David: Verse 18 says, therefore encourage one another with these words.

Peter: Maybe that's where I thought of it.

David: I know, there you go.

So I'm thinking about this phrase, we will always be with the Lord, and I kind of want to stress it in three different ways. One is, the first way to stress it would be we will always be with the Lord. So in this part of the sermon, maybe I'd emphasize what it means to have a Lord.

David: Oh, and Luther's explanation in the second article is so wonderful.

Oh my gosh, in the large catechism's explanation in the second article.

Peter: Yeah, really the Lordship that I may live under him and serve under him being his kingdom, the Lordship of Jesus, which is really, sometimes it's hard to see that.

We know that all things are subject to him right now, but we just don't see it now, Hebrews.

But to think about, we will always be with the Lord.

And maybe now if I was really going to get creative, Dave, I would have the people actually say this, we will always be with the Lord during the sermon, and I'd have them emphasize different parts of the, we will always be with the Lord.

Okay, so who is the Lord? Well, of course the Lord is Jesus, the risen one, the crucified and risen one, the one who is over all and reigns over all.

We know that now by faith, but then we will see it.

David: Right.  
Peter: That's really encouraging.  
So a second part of the sermon could be we will always be with the Lord.  
Because the text here talks about, you know, we who are alive, who are left until the kind of Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.  
The dead in Christ will rise first.  
And so I emphasize the corporate nature of, it's not I will be with the Lord.  
Paul's not saying you as an individual, you'll be with Jesus, everything will be fine.  
But we, so you could kind of pick up a little bit from, was it last week, All Saints Sunday?  
Jessica: Yes.  
Peter: You can pick up on last week All Saints Sunday, where you're talking about all the Saints who have gone before, who are currently alive.  
We, the big we, will all be with the Lord.  
David: Not to be too negative, but it would be, it will really be nice when we're all raised and we're finally perfect and I can be with you with the Lord without all of the things I see now that make me wonder, you know, I don't know.  
Peter: No, it's true. We will always be with the Lord.  
David: It's like, really? Oh no.  
Peter: The sinful we is not, that's not really good news.  
David: I only want us in our best selves to be with the Lord.  
And that's going to be the risen David Schmitt, not this one.  
Peter: Yeah.  
David: Because you don't want to be with me always.  
Peter: Who is the we there?  
You could look at who is the we in terms of numbers or kind of like saints on earth, saints in heaven, that kind of thing.  
Or you could look at the we as we, the renewed, kind of restored people of God.  
So you could go a couple of different directions in the second. Who are the we?  
David: So that's kind of, that could be a little tension in the sermon.  
Yeah.  
Peter: Yeah. A little tension, a little, a little honesty.  
Jessica: That's a good, that's a good convicting point. Right?  
How can I be too mad at somebody when I know they will be in heaven with me forever?  
Just like I'm getting in, they're getting in.  
So they can't be too much of my enemy, this Christian brother or sister,  
because God's going to forgive them too and we will be with the Lord.  
That's good to remember.  
Peter: Yeah.  
Jessica: A little intense.  
It might change how I treat them though.

Peter: Well, it'll help you maybe bear with them a little bit more.  
David: Right, right. Bear one another's burdens. Yeah.  
Peter: So we will always be with the Lord.  
And then the last emphasis would be we will always, always be with the Lord.  
And we live in this time of nothing is permanent, things are transient, things fall apart, relationships fall apart, our bodies fall apart.  
There's an impermanence to life on this side of Lord's return that is always, always, life is always a little fragile and the stability and the permanence is lacking.  
And so this we will always, and then I would really lean into kind of the, the eternal nature of the reign of God.

David: Well now why, why put them in that order? What are you thinking?  
Why start with Lord then move to we then move to always?

Peter: What do you think Jessica? Would you go to we or would you go to always next?

Jessica: Oh, we, always is the greatest part. You're going to end with that.

David: Yeah, yeah. So you can always, always.

Peter: Okay. All right. That's why I thought of it in this order because I knew that was a good idea.  
And Jessica, I thought you would say that too. So I figured I'd better beat you to the punch.

Jessica: You know us so well.

Peter: But I do like that if I can have people leave in the sermon with that on their minds and that on their lips, we will always be with the Lord. We will always be with the Lord. We will always be with the Lord.  
Then I think I'm encouraging the congregation as Paul says at the end there.

Jessica: That's such a good idea. I like that there's one phrase that you come away with that's so encouraging.  
Whoever leads your children's message, make sure they know that so that that can be the focus of the children's message too.  
That's a nice, easy one. It's short. I'm sure you can find a coloring page that says that.  
So coordinate because that's so good. David, what about you? What would you preach on?

David: Okay, so I guess I am like not as encouraging as Peter.  
I went with the Amos text.  
Amos is just, he's, as a prophet, oh, he's just got a wicked tongue.  
He is, he's got satire and he is, he's nasty.  
He's nasty as a prophet. And I think you see it here. And it's kind of, it's funny and sad and just rough.  
And so I kind of decided to go with Amos. And I'm also, I mean, this is interesting.  
I'm also going to do kind of one of these things with there's a one sentence that would be important.

But now for me, I know it's strange, but it's going to be ...

Peter: It's a bear meeting him.

David: I know. I know. Well, it kind of. So the sentence for me is it's, it's just one of those days.  
Have you ever said that? It's just one of those days. What do you mean when you say it's just one of those days?

Peter: Well, you mean that it's wearing you down?

David: It's wearing you down.

Peter: You know, you just want it to be over, frankly. I know. I know. Right.

David: So you've got, you know, I go out, I have a flat tire. I get that thing filled and then I'm doing this presentation and I get a call that my mom's in an accident. And then I'm walking with Lane and she falls and breaks her hip. And it's just like, it's just one of those days. You're just going to, you're like, it is all coming out and it's not good. And I've just got to acknowledge it and go through it.  
Right. It's just one of those days. That's how I use the phrase.  
So, Jessica, I'd like you to read to us why it is just one of those days.  
Start at verse 18 and go through verse 20.

Jessica: Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord. Okay, pause. Wait a minute. Aren't we supposed to want the day of the Lord?

David: Yes, you are. This is why he's being mean. I told you he's satirical. He's biting. He's just, as a prophet, he is. He's got a sharp tongue and a sharp edge to him. So he's saying, you want the day of the Lord?  
Yeah, I'll bring you the day of the Lord. That's what he's saying. Okay. So woe to you who desire the day of the Lord.

Jessica: Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord. Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light, as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall and a serpent bit him.  
Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

David: The other half of the text is delightful. Because Amos, again, I tell you, he's so mean.  
So Jessica, read 21 through 23.

Jessica: I hate I despise your feast, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them.  
And the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.  
Take away from me the noise of your songs. To the melody of your harps, I will not listen.

David: Okay, so I mean, once again, Amos is like taking the things that the people are delighting in, and having God say to them, I hate this.

Peter: Yeah, I mean, it really cuts to the heart.

David: Oh my gosh.

Peter: Just having the right form and the right feasts and songs, that doesn't, God looks deeper into your heart than just that.

David: And that's that verse 24. What is it that God wants? Does he want all of this stuff in your worship while you're persecuting the poor? Is that what makes God happy? And verse 24 is the answer. Read that.

Jessica: It says, but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. As the person sitting in the pew, I think I might want to know what's going on here. Like, why is Amos saying that? What were the Israelites or the children of God doing?

David: It's a very, very prosperous time. The Assyrians have kind of regrouped. They're going to come out in full force later, but they've kind of regrouped. And that pressure off of that area has allowed for Israel to flourish. And people are saying it's like the days of Solomon again. And because everything is so prosperous, they're sure, they're so sure that God is happy with them. And in the midst of prosperity, they're engaging in false practices, using the wrong measures of weights and not taking care of the poor. Selling the poor for a pair of sandals, I think, is one line that you'll get from Amos. And so Amos is speaking to a very prosperous people who are sure that their prosperity is a sign that God loves them and is satisfied with them. Even while those people who are engaging in these worship practices that are beautiful and are sure that God is loving them, even while they are not following God's desire of justice in their care in the world. You want the day of the Lord. You're imagining that this day of the Lord is going to be a day of restoration. The light's going to dawn. The kingdoms are going to be brought back together. We're going to have a Messiah. It's going to be a peaceable kingdom. And Amos steps in and says, you want the day of the Lord? Here's the day of the Lord. It's not going to be light. It's going to be darkness. It's going to be like you're running away from a bear. I got away from the bear. And then you know, you're running away from a lion. I got away from a lion and then a bear gets you. You go into a house to escape something. You put your hand on the wall and a serpent bites you. That's the kind of day it's going to be where the Lord is going to have his way with you and he's not happy.

And so it's just going to it's going to happen. And I think to me, that's kind of what you see happening here. And you can think of times in Scripture when it was like that and God is the one in control of this.

I mean, that's the thing about this is that God is the one in control of this and it's going from bad to worse.

And so it's just one of those days. Right. I mean, so I know this is like sad. It's not encouraging.

Peter: You know, this is the crucifixion. Yes. Things going from bad to worse.

David: Right. Jesus comes to save the people and instead he gets killed.

Peter: Right.

David: And so you've just got, you know, if things keep going from bad to worse.

He has a disciple follow him and the disciple denies him. You know, I mean, it's just kind of like you could just you could walk through that journey of Jesus to the cross and kind of, you know, say it's just one of those days.

And yet, and yet that's the that's the turn. Right.

Peter: Right.

David: That God uses this.

You know, there's there's a lot of judgment here and the day of the Lord is going to be a day of judgment.

And we see we see many days of judgments in all of our lives. And you see it throughout scripture, these judges, the Book of Judges is an example of, you know, it's just one of those decades.

Just one of those centuries.

Peter: One of those generations.

David: I know. Right.

You know, so you've got that that happening.

But then the turn of the sermon is that when you do get to the crucifixion and this is the day of the Lord, this is the judgment.

Then it is it is just one of those days that saves you. Huh.

Right. So there's there's just one day you've got all of these days of judgment throughout scripture that we see.

But just one of those days is necessary for salvation.

That God himself who is bringing judgment enters into judgment.

Jesus enters into God's judgment. And that is the one day.

And you just need one of those days to know that you are God's and to know that he is with you.

So that would be kind of how I would work with it. It's a it's a really hard text.

And it's kind of I mean, and I think sometimes the this is how people feel who joined the church and expect everything to go right.

Peter: Hmm.

David: And it doesn't. Right. I mean, it's kind of like it's it's fighting against that prosperity gospel or that, you know. So I take my children to, you know, the parochial school and this is what happens to them.

Peter: Right.

David: Right. And this is these are the things that happen. And so you just kind of get this this sense of, you know, that that God's against me.

It's all kind of fallen apart. And it's when that happens that you just hold on to one day, because just one of those days is sufficient for your salvation.

Jessica: That's all for today. We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at Concordia Theology dot org. You can find more episodes of this show on Spotify, Google, Apple.

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I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeau.

Join us next week here at Lectionary Kickstart with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.

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He's nasty as a prophet because you don't want to be with me always.