

#768 Judgment Day (Part 1)

Today's Thursday Theology is short dramatic scene by the Rev. Dr. Steve Albertin, a frequent Crossings writer and my fellow editor on the ThTheol tem. Steve composed this scene in December 2012, as an introduction to a sermon on Mark 13:1-8. In that gospel text, Jesus discusses the end times and the impending destruction of the temple. Next week we'll bring you the sermon itself, in which Steve tackles the question of how to square Jesus' prediction of impending judgment with the clear, hard fact that the world did not end in the disciples' lifetimes.

Peace and Joy,
Carol Braun, for the editorial team

"Judgment Day"

Mark 13:1-8

Christ Church
The Lutheran Church of Zionsville
Rev. Dr. Steven E. Albertin
December 15, 2012

Introductory Drama

(Scene: The entrance to eternity. A man sits at a desk, papers before him. A woman enters. She goes to the man and stands quietly. The man looks up.)

A: Heaven on your right—hell on your left.

B: *(Looking at the doors, in awe)* You mean that door leads to heaven...and that one to hell?

A: That is correct. Please don't take too long. There are others waiting.

B: But...what do I do?

A: You go through one of them.

B: You mean I have the choice?

A: That is correct.

B: (*Craftily*) Oh, well, I'll take heaven.

A: (*Motioning*) Over there, please.

B: Well, thanks... (*She starts toward heaven gleefully. As she is about to go through the door, she stops a moment. She turns and comes back.*) Now look. I don't want to make any mistakes at a time like this. You're giving me my choice...I can go to heaven or to hell. That's what you said, isn't it?

A: That is correct.

B: I mean, if I choose heaven, it's not some sort of...er...test or something? There are no strings attached?

A: There are no strings attached.

B: (*Relieved*) I had no idea it would be like this. Well, thanks... (*She starts toward heaven. She hesitates, then comes back.*) Now I don't want you to think that just because I choose heaven that I've always been a model of good behavior... (*Hastily*) I haven't always been perfect. Who has? (*She laughs as though sharing a joke.*) I'm not trying to get out of anything.

A: I understand.

B: All right, then. Just so long as it's clear. (*She starts toward heaven. Hesitates. Comes back.*) Er...pardon me...

A: Yes?

B: I mean, once I go in there, I *stay* there?

A: You stay there.

B: I mean this *is*...er...Judgment Day?

A: This is Judgment Day.

B: And once I make my decision, it's final...

A: Final.

B: I don't believe it! That's not the way it is at all! The righteous go to heaven and are rewarded for their goodness... The wicked go to hell and are punished for their sins! Ask anybody!

A: Please don't take too long. There are others waiting.

B: But this is idiotic! Doesn't everybody choose heaven?

A: Some.

B: Look, have I got it wrong? In heaven the streets are paved with gold, isn't that so?

A: That is correct.

B: And hell is a burning pit where you burn forever. Isn't that right?

A: That is correct.

B: Then I fail to understand why anyone would choose to . . . (*She starts toward heaven. Hesitates. Comes back.*) What's

going on here? Don't you know I've lived all my life in fear of this day with the view of getting into heaven and cheating hell? What are you trying to get away with around here? I demand a fair trial!

A: No trial.

B: You mean to sit there and tell me this is Judgment Day and there's no trial?

A: That is correct.

B: This is outrageous! I demand a hearing! My father pulled a trick like this on me once and I never forgave him. I was in the fifth grade. I skipped school one day. I came home later and he asked me where I'd been. I told him I'd been in school. Lied to him. He said the school had called up and asked where I was. I wasn't there. So I told him the truth... I confessed... I told him I'd lied and everything! And what did he do? He *grinned* at me and went back to his paper! (*Savagely*) What kind of business is that? He should have taken that strap and beaten me within an inch of my life! (*More angry*) Now I come up here... Judgment Day... ready to pay for my sins... (*She beats on the table*) I want a hearing! I demand a trial!

A: No trial. Please don't take too long.

B: It's not fair... You can't do this to me... I'm innocent... I never had the chance that other people had... I've had a hard life... I didn't mean to do anything bad... Give me just one more chance... (*She starts running to the door into hell.*) Please...

A: There are others waiting.

B: Father! Father! Help me! (*She runs out of the door into hell*)

A: (*Looking up*) Next, please

To the left, hell. To the right, heaven. And she went left. I don't get it. What was the matter with her? Couldn't she see the obvious? And she chose hell. She couldn't help herself.

But heaven without a trial? Heaven without an opportunity to justify herself?

We would not make that mistake! Or would we?