

## Our Only God and Savior

The Epistle for the Last Sunday of the Church Year is Jude 20-25. Jude first gives an exhortation to each believer regarding that individual's personal faith: "Be built up in the faith," "Remain in in God's love" and Expect Christ's mercy for eternal life. This vigilance is necessary as long as we live on earth in a sinful world.

Jude begins our reading by reminding the recipients of their status as *beloved* in Christ. He then proceeds to use verses 20-23 to give them suggestions on how they can live out their lives in the following phrases: *building yourselves up in your most holy faith*. We do that through the Word and Sacraments. *Praying in the Holy Spirit*. This is done by praying according to God's Word, which the Spirit inspired.

Verse 21 reads: *keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life*. God keeps believers in his love and enables them to keep themselves in his love. Romans 8:35-39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Now in Jude 22-23, Jude turns to contending for the faith in relation to those members who, to one degree or another, have been deceived and seduced by the heretical intruders. All Christians may have questions. Even David asked questions in the Psalms. Those who inquire should be treated with patience so that faith might overcome their doubts. This may well rescue them from the verge of destruction.

Verses 24-25 are a benediction for the faithful as they struggle to persevere in a sinful world and as they seek to carry out acts of mercy in a corrupt and dangerous setting. The view is toward the coming of Christ and everlasting life. Time is short.

Jude emphasizes that salvation is not based on our own reason or strength but is wholly the Father's work in Christ. As the Lord grants you opportunity, share the message of salvation with boldness, for it truly comes from the Lord and He truly works through that testimony, leading those who repent to great joy.

Prayer: Lord, grant me present joy in my service and everlasting joy in the glories of heaven you prepared for me through Christ Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)