

**Sermon: Luke 21:5-19**  
**November 13, 2016**  
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**Luke 21:5-19**

<sup>5</sup>When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, <sup>6</sup>“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.” <sup>7</sup>They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” <sup>8</sup>And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them. <sup>9</sup>“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup>there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup>“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. <sup>13</sup>This will give you an opportunity to testify. <sup>14</sup>So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; <sup>15</sup>for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup>You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup>You will be hated by all because of my name. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup>By your endurance you will gain your souls.

Last Monday night, in our Bible Study, we joked as we read and studied the scripture lessons for today about how sometimes we wish we could have different texts, different words to read and study.

Our Gospel text this morning is full of bad news. In fact, I joked at Bible Study that I wasn't going to let them leave until they told me what the Good News was in this Gospel lesson.

And I have a confession to make here to you this morning. I have been praying a lot this past week, but that is not the confession. I regularly pray a lot. But I have been concerned for quite some time with what has been happening in this most recent election cycle; to our country and to us as individuals. But that is not the confession either. My confession is this, this morning I think we need to directly address what has happened this last week as we set about electing our next president. Because, I am truly concerned, and I know that many, if not most all of you are, as well.

And these words that Jesus gives us here in our Gospel, I think speak directly to our situation today. And I am confident that Jesus is calling on each one of you, each one of us, this morning. And I am calling on each one of you directly, as well.

Too many of us got distracted during this election cycle. Luke's Gospel reminds us continually that it is all about what we see and what we fail to see. And too many of us got distracted about what we were looking at.

It happens. It happened to the disciples, too. It is interesting, Jesus is trying to talk to them about the end times. Jesus has had his face turned to Jerusalem for some time now and he has told them what this journey is going to mean for him and for them.

He told them he would be beaten, be crucified, die and rise again. But here he is just days away from dying on the cross and his focus has shifted to preparing them for the world they would be living in after he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. Serious stuff. And they got distracted.

They saw something pretty amazing, the temple, the large beautiful stones it was made of. It really was amazing. King Herod had rebuilt the temple. In fact, he had more than doubled the size of the temple mount. The stones were huge, some of them weighing between 2 and 3 tons. They were also distracted by the wealthy worshipers coming to dedicate their lavish gifts at the temple.

It is pretty easy for us to become distracted over the display of enormous wealth, too. In our election we finally arrived at two candidates who were fabulously wealthy. And we got distracted.

We got distracted by middle of the night tweets, video and audio clips old and new, by the sex of the candidates, and by hidden and deleted emails that were resurrected.

Remember, this is about what we see and what we don't see. The disciples saw the temple, the big beautiful stones, the wealthy gifts and they thought they saw something permanent.

Jesus told them that appearances can be deceiving. All those stones will be thrown down. He meant that in more ways than one. First, literally, the temple would be destroyed. And it was, about 35 or 40 years after Jesus' death. But he was also speaking about that too, his death. Jesus, the word made flesh, Jesus, now the place that God's word dwells, that temple, his body, will also be destroyed.

It seems like every generation has, or rather thinks they have, their own end times. Jesus wasn't predicting when the end times would happen, only stating that they will occur.

But before that, before his final return, a lot of things will happen. Wars, insurrections, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. And even more than that, it will get personal. He says, "Before all of this occurs, they will arrest you, persecute you."

Now, as the result of this past Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, for many people, they are acting as if this is the end times. To be fair, both candidates and their political parties led everyone to believe that this was the case. Each led their followers to believe that if their opponent got elected, it would be the end of the world.

As a result, sadly, we have seen hateful, harmful, violent, and destruction actions and language from all sides. Maybe this is how one acts in the end times, except that Jesus didn't say when all of this would happen, only that it will.

As a matter of fact, Jesus tells us that no one except God knows the time when all this will occur. So I guess, I will be more than surprised if the world is coming to an end right now and that besides God, that it is only the Hillary Clinton supporters that know the time schedule.

This has been an election cycle based on fear. A huge number of people voted not really for someone, but out of fear of the other. Fear comes naturally to us – it is a result of our sin, of our brokenness, of our separating ourselves from God. It started in the garden, when after sin, Adam and Eve hid from God, out of fear.

We are seeing it now, even more so this last week; young people at school crying over the election results, immigrants wondering if they will have to leave the country, individuals who are part of the LGBTQ community worried if it is safe to be out now. We have heard slogans about banning all Muslims and about building a wall. We have heard people continue to shout “I'm with her” and “Not my president.”

Fear is easy. That is why Jesus said to the disciples in our Gospel text and to us here this morning, “Do not be terrified. Do not fear.”

Let me ask you this – How would you act if you knew your future was secure? Seriously. Last Sunday night in our Adult Ed class, we were talking about money and about the Theology of Enough. One significant fear that many people have, for example, is about money and retirement.

So let me ask you, how would live differently today if you knew that you would have enough money for retirement? How would we act or live differently today as our Good Shepherd faith community, if we were not worried about covering the budget, if we knew we would have enough?

You see, that is what Jesus is saying to the disciples. That is what he is saying to us in the middle of a post-election time in a world that seems to be a mess and where everyone seems to be living in fear. Jesus is asking you and me, “How should you live in light of the fact that I have guaranteed your survival? Not a hair of your head will perish.”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, your future is secure. Stop with the fear.

Too many of us put our faith, based our identity in Hillary Clinton and all we heard was Donald Trump is unfit, he hates women. Too many of us put our faith and based our identity in Donald Trump and all we heard was Hillary Clinton is crooked, that she is personally getting rich off of the government.

We know better than to do this. We put our faith, we find our identity, only in our Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the one who secures our future. The only one who can secure our future. This allows us to live in the freedom of knowing that our future is secure.

Now, knowing this doesn't mean that we Christ followers, we Christians, get to simply sit back and relax, that we don't have to do anything, because after all, it is all taken care of. In fact, it is the opposite. God is calling on you.

Jesus tells the disciples in our Gospel and he is telling us – it is exactly in these times, in times of chaos, and disruption, and fear – that is when you are needed to step up, as his followers, it is in these times you are given an opportunity to testify.

It is easy to testify in the good times. When you are sure you are going to win, it is easy to profess, “Love trumps hate.” But our opportunity to testify, to act, is when things are anything but certain in this world. We know our future is secure. Now is when we need to say and show this world that yes, “Love does trump hate.”

So, sisters and brothers, God is calling on you to act and so am I. Jesus says to us that he will give us the words. Well, here are some pretty good ones to start with.

Our calling to act, our responsibility as Christians was spelled out long ago. It hasn't changed. It was the same under President Bush as it is now under President Obama, and will be under President Trump. The prophet Micah gave it to us: We are to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

Do justice – that means we need to stand for and with anyone being mistreated, who is living in fear, and who is unable to stand or speak for themselves.

Love kindness – this means we need to stop labeling everyone and putting them in groups. Instead of playing identity politics, we need to see and treat each other with the only identity we have that truly matters – we are all children of God.

And to walk humbly with God means we have to stop shouting at each other, to not assume that we have it all figured out. We have to stop creating sides, assuming that everyone who voted for Trump is a racist or a bigot. We have to stop assuming that everyone who voted for Hillary did so just because she was a woman and they were just looking for another first for a president.

You know this, when we create sides, when we draw lines between us and them, we automatically put Jesus on the other side, Jesus is on the side of the other.

So remember, you and I, we, are being called right now. And knowing that our future is secure thanks to Jesus and the cross, know that during these stressful post-election days and in the weeks and months ahead – you are being given as Christians, in the mess and fear, you are being the opportunity to testify.

As you think about what words you may use, in person, on Facebook, Twitter, throughout social media – as you think about what actions you may take, how you will treat others, how you will act toward or speak with them - these words from the apostle Paul might be good for us to use as a filter, before we speak or post our comment or hit that send button.

Paul says, “I beg you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”

Sisters and brothers, testify: with humility, gentleness, patience, love, with peace. You can do it. We can do it together. This world needs your testimony, now.  
Amen.