

Sermon November 13, 2022 Luke 21:5-38

(Please read the Gospel text on the back of the bulletin.)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today's words from Jesus about end times contains prophecies about two separate events and two separate ends. The first is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The second is the destruction of the world – the end of days. It is easy to get the two mixed together, because Luke does not give many directions as to which is which. I usually read or hear people talking as though these prophecies were all about the end of the world. They are not. Thankfully, we have been at this long enough to figure it out and make the correct separations between the two prophecies and properly understand what Jesus is teaching us here in the section of the Bible.

The prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple run from verse 5 of chapter 21 through verse 24 and include the following: false Christs; wars and insurrections; nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom; earthquakes; famines; plagues; terrifying events; great signs from heaven; betrayal for the faith; and Jerusalem will be encircled by armies and desecrated by Gentiles.

The prophecies about the coming of the end of the age run from verse 25 through 36 and include: signs in the sun and moon and stars; tossing of the sea; and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

There is not much gain in going over the events of the destruction of Jerusalem in detail other than to point out that all those events happened in the first century, and there is no sense to imagine that end time events still center around Jerusalem, as is still the case with many people who teach and believe in a millennial thousand years of time *following* the final appearing of Christ. In reality, the final end times events will not center around Jerusalem, but rather the whole earth and the cosmos itself, as all creation will unravel before the very eyes of those who are then living.

Research into the universe has uncovered truths about creation that are nothing short of the greatest mysteries of life. Albert Einstein predicted the existence of black holes in space, and research has confirmed they are real. Black holes can absorb light and all matter that gets in close. The laws of time and space seem to dissolve along with that matter and light. Wormholes are said to connect distant parts of the universe by means of corridors where again such laws of time and space seem to be suspended. We are also told that most of the energy in creation is something called dark energy. This energy cannot be measured in the same way we measure light, heat, chemical, and electrical energies, yet it accounts for the vast majority of all energy.

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, ... people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Luke 21:25

When we reach the edge of the end of time, it seems that those unique astronomical anomalies will not be the only places where the laws of nature no longer apply. Creation will begin to unravel before our very eyes. Constellations will lose their dot-to-dot shapes. Perhaps the sun will melt. The moon change size. All the things the Creator placed in the heavens to provide us with order, mark locations and times and seasons will themselves be in disarray. People will faint in fear because of what it all may mean.

Anyone here enjoy a good plate of seafood? Tuna, cod, shrimp, lobster? How about crab legs? I have bad news. The 2022-23 Alaskan snow and king crab harvest has been cancelled. Almost all the crabs have disappeared. The expected 8 billion crabs has fallen to only 1 billion crustaceans. No one knows why. There are conspiracy theories. Some say it's global warming, but Canada's waters are full of crabs. We don't know. It's inexplicable. Many people's lives who depend on the harvest will be badly hurt. Something is wrong with the sea. Jesus says something will be REALLY wrong with the sea in the last days.

... and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves ... Luke 21:25

The sea has always been the place where evil is assigned its abode. Sea monsters, multi-tentacled beasts and leviathan stir and trouble the waters. The end of days

will make those past churnings look like a kindergarten girl's birthday party with ponies and bouncy slide in comparison!

Jesus tells us what to watch out for to know when the end will come. The signs will be in the sky and in the sea. Jesus also teaches us the importance of being ready. If we are not ready when the signs come, well ... it will not be a good thing.

Be watchful in every season, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Luke 21:36

Here is the source of the age-old formula to be prepared for the end times – watch and pray. Indeed, Jesus admonishes us to watch for these things and pray we be ready if/ when they come upon us as the proverbial thief in the night. Jesus also instructs us to do a few other things. When we see the signs of the end, rather than folding up like an old card table, fainting, and falling to the ground, Jesus says to straighten up. Jesus' arrival in glory is about to take place. Lift up your heads and look for the coming of Jesus in the clouds. When he comes, see him in the clouds – the one who will soon gather his people before him. Be on watch. Be on the lookout. Stay frosty and alert. Expect to see him in his glory.

Jesus also tells us to know what is happening when these things take place in the sky and sea. Don't forget. Don't be unawares. Don't be ignorant. KNOW. Jesus compares this to leaves on a tree. When the leaves come out, it is summer. When the sky melts and sea is in great tumult, know Jesus is on the way. Other comparisons we might make would be as when the tea kettle whistles, the water boils. When the alarm chimes, the time is over, etc. KNOW what it means when these signs come to pass.

Jesus explains in this prophecy that at the end of time the heavens will be shaken. There will be a great disturbance in the forces of nature. However, this will not be the first time when such a thing has happened. Remember Jesus' crucifixion?

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. Luke 23:44-45

Luke doesn't write that it became very cloudy and overcast. Luke doesn't write that a severe storm rolled in and made it seem like night. Luke writes that *the sun's light failed*. The sun's light was not diffused. Neither was the sun's light blocked. Rather, *the sun stopped shining*. It was as though creation itself could not countenance the cosmic injustice of the sinless Lamb of God crucified in the place of sinful mankind. When Jesus paid our ransom that we might be returned to the Father, the laws of nature were suspended. The sun stopped shining and the Roman Centurion proclaimed that surely Jesus was the Son of God. How much more will nature come apart at the seams when the resurrected and reigning Son of God returns in glory and justice falls not on Jesus but on an unbelieving world?

Yet we know that Jesus suffered the consequences for our sin and died our death, and that in his crucifixion and resurrection we are forgiven of all our debts to God and live forever by his power. We do not need to live in the fear of the stars falling from the sky or the sea wildly tossing as will happen on the last day. Jesus has made us ready. We watch and pray until the end not in fear, but in joyous expectation of the coming of Christ in glory. Then will be the completion of all the promises of God to us in Jesus Christ. Then we, with all God's saints, will enter into his glory and the everlasting kingdom of God.

**The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him.
Amen.**

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