

## Sermon for November 17, 2013

### Twentieth Sixth Sunday of Pentecost, Luke 21:5-19

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Since the 1950's Hollywood has made **more** than 200 films depicting our **fascination** regarding apocalyptic events that involve the **end** of time in **some** form or another. Movies such as: "The Day the Earth Stood Still", "Aliens", "Armageddon", and "Left Behind" are a **few** of the names. We have **known** many such apocalyptic **type** events in recent years: the collapse of the twin towers, the tsunami in Indonesia, earthquakes, and the devastating hurricanes, and tornadoes that took place **right** here in the **mid**-section of our own country. These are events where **thousands** of people have died.

We talked about this a **bit** this morning but: **undoubtedly** you have heard the **news** stories which are coming out of the Philippines regarding the **typhoon** which hit that country last week. It has been called 'the strongest storm on the planet so far this year' with **sustained** winds clocked at **195**mph with gusts as strong as **235**mph. Approximately **2,500** people are known dead and are being buried in **mass** graves. There are more than **600,000** people who have been displaced because of this storm. Apocalyptic words such as calamity, dismal,

devastating, wide spread destruction, and incredible are being used to describe this **tragic** event.

Many times these events do not impact us **directly** here in So. Calif. Possibly we think of these things happening ‘**over there**’ or in another state or city. Apocalyptic events do **not** have to be so **grandiose** as one might think. What about in your **own** life when you have an event occur that you would consider devastating, incredible, or a calamity? A life changing event, an end of times type of situation, could happen to *any one of us* in the **blink** of an eye.

In **each** of our readings for this morning we heard of more **all encompassing** doomsday warnings. Our first reading from Malachi, in 2 short verses, we heard about **burning** like an oven, where the **arrogant and evildoers** will be stubble, where neither **root nor branch** will be left. On the **flip side** though—those who **revere** God’s name the sun of **righteousness** will rise with **healing** on its wings.

In the Apostle **Paul’s** letter to the Thessalonians believers are warned to keep away from those who live in idleness, the busybodies, and those who did **not work** because **some** of the people in that area had been taught that the end was near so they **quit** their jobs and began to **sit around and wait**. On this flip side of **this** warning Paul tells the believers do not be weary in doing what is right.

Then in our **gospel** lesson, Jesus was once again at the temple in Jerusalem. As we get **closer** to the end of Luke’s gospel we can hear Jesus’ words becoming

**darker and darker** and more **foreboding**. Today we hear the foretelling of the destruction of the temple—a **magnificent temple** which took more than **70** years to complete. A temple that was nearly a **mile** in length in each direction, had inner and outer courts that were as large as **24** football fields, it would hold up to **400,000** people at one time, some of the walls were **150** feet tall, the **Holy of Holies** where **God** was said to dwell was covered in gold, and it was said that when the sun shone on the white marble the whole temple mount looked like a **snow** covered mountain. It must have been something to behold this **beautiful** temple built to the **glory** of God. Yet, Jesus said it would be **destroyed** and not a **stone** would be left upon another; **all** would be thrown down. How could that possibly happen?????

Jesus goes on to tell **those** who were with him of the signs and persecutions which were **also** going to happen. He warned them to **not** be lead astray or **go after** those who came in His name claiming to be Him. He said there would be wars, insurrections, nations against nations, kingdoms against kingdoms, there would be great earthquakes, famines, plagues, dreadful warnings, and great signs from heaven. Also, there would be arrests, persecutions, betrayal by family members, and he warned that **some** would even be put to death. They would be hated by all because of Jesus' name. This was **terrible** news for sure!!!!

Imagine the **fear** that hearing this news would evoke in people's hearts and minds. Thoughts of: **impossible**, **how** could this happen, **when** will it happen, **what** will the signs be that this is about to take place, **why** would this happen, **how** could one prepare for it? Is there **anything** one could do so it would not come about?

Let me ask you, how about when **you** have had something catastrophic happen in your life? Do you **ever** ask yourself **any** of these type of questions not **really** understanding or being able to **comprehend** what it all means for you? Maybe it was a death of a loved one, an unexpected serious health issue, a financial crisis, a divorce, a job loss, having to move and leave beloved friends behind, or any **number** of things.

In the **next** breath Jesus gives **hope** in the face of all this tragedy and upheaval. Here is where the **Spirit** of God, the **Spirit** which is part of each and every human being comes into play. Whether it be in **our** own trials or challenges or when **personal** difficulties overcome us our **text** brings the point of what Jesus was saying to them, “When these things happen—this will give you an opportunity to testify. I will give you words and a wisdom. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

**Comfort** in the face of adversity. **Mindful** that **God** will be with us. As we hang on and hang in even during the **toughest** times and as we endure and bear

**witness** to the **faith** that sustains us...we gain our souls. The purpose remains in every age and in every Christian life that when we are under hardship—*no matter what age we are*—we remain **rooted** in faith and take the **opportunity** to share that faith in the midst of these trials. Is it **possible** for us to see, to claim, and to testify to God’s work amid the various setbacks, challenges, and even the tragedies we face? Believe me **I know** it is hard sometimes for us to see the good in a situation that leaves us **so defeated and devastated** that we think we can no longer go on. But **hard** as it may be to fathom—God is **active** in these times and places, always working to help, to comfort, and to save us.

When we recognize that God is with us we discover the opportunity *not just to see and benefit* from God’s act but also to be a **witness** to it. We will be given an opportunity to **testify** about God’s goodness, we will be **given** the words, we will be **given** a wisdom, and not a **hair** of our heads will ever perish because of what **Jesus Christ** did for you and I by **dying** on the cross giving us eternal life. By our endurance and perseverance we are gaining our souls for **all** eternity. Even in the worst of times this is a promise we can **hold** on to.

My prayer for you all is that when the **world** falls down around you, and not **one** stone of your world is left upon another, when you have **found** yourself in the depths of despair and torment—that you will hear the **good news** of the gospel

story bringing you salvation and hope. Delivering you to a place where the **light** of God will **shine** upon you most brilliantly. **AMEN.**