



“The End is Nearish....Maybe”

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 & 10:45 am Sunday, November 13, 2016
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Grace and peace be to you from God Our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Well it's Sunday after the election! Who did you vote for? Just kidding, don't answer that question. Many people feel like these guys. (original Ghostbusters cast on screen) Characters from the original *Ghostbusters* movie, after the rise of ghosts come out of all the of the buildings and sewers, speaking to the New York City mayor they say, *“This country is headed for a disaster of biblical proportions, real wrath of God stuff. Fire and brimstone coming down from the skies! Rivers and seas boiling! Forty years of darkness! Earthquakes, volcanos. . . The dead rising from the grave! Human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together. . .mass hysteria!”*

There have been many times though in human history where good and faithful people have probably felt the same way that some of you might feel. Through other difficult election results and wars, whether they were global or civil or cold, social and political unrest, through disease and plague, invasion and revolution, and persecution and genocide.

Jesus is walking with his disciples and the disciples are looking at the big beautiful complex known as the Temple Mount, where the Temple and all the other buildings were, great big porticos, large pillars, gilded roof. The disciples are talking about this great city, this Temple which was the pride and center of Jewish life; the place of daily sacrifice, of the blowing of shofars, giant horns signally the call to worship. This was the city that would have hundreds of thousands of pilgrims converge on it for the holy festivals of the Jewish calendar. It was the center of their life, and the disciples were so proud to look at it and to see the beauty and the majesty of it.

For Jesus, however, the Temple meant something a little different. The Temple was that place where only a few days before he had gone out and cleansed all the money changers, kicking them out. It is in the Temple grounds where he receives hostile questions from Pharisees and Sadducees and priests. It is on the Temple Mount where he denounces the scribes, those who were the lawyers of their days of the religious law. It is on the Temple Mount where he noted the generosity of a poor widow and the hypocrisy of those who were rich. It is on the Temple Mount where Jesus encountered rejection of his message of mercy and love and God's coming kingdom. It is on the Temple Mount where Jesus preaches against corruption and self-righteous.

Beautiful? Majestic? All will be thrown down Jesus says. And in only forty more years this prophecy would be realized when those Temple buildings, stone by stone, would be cast down the Temple Mount by the Romans. But the gospel writer Luke, as terrible as that seems, makes clear that the end of the Temple is not *the End*. There will be other signs, wars and violence, natural disasters, famines, sickness, persecutions and that's where it gets personal for you and for me and for the church around the world. Jesus says, "**You** will be persecuted." You will be thrown in prison for your beliefs.

It's all gonna fall apart, you see. Mass hysteria... Cats and dogs living together. And the gospel writer presents these not in any chronological order that you and I could perhaps follow. I know this is going to sound difficult for some of the Pentecostals that would like to line these things up and see where we're headed right to Armageddon. Luke layers this one thing on top of another. These images look like the stones that are cast down at the bottom of the Temple Mount, they're just piled on one another. And hence our theme, *The End is Nearish*. . . .*Maybe*.

It can seem to believers as though God is far away, yet Jesus seeks to comfort all his disciples. All of this is a part of God's plan to save creation. And so, what do we do? How are you and I suppose to live our lives in the meantime?

Paul, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Christians in Thessalonika, a community on the Greek coast offers these incredible time images. Time Images... the last days, that's a time image. The end of times, you have heard of that one before, Armageddon, a little bit more sinister. Here is the one I like, "the great arrival." The Greek word there is **parousia**. It is the idea that Jesus is going to come again in a great revival. Some scholars believe that the concern over the end times, this great arrival of Jesus lead the people in Thessalonika to stop working. Jesus is coming at any time, so hey, why do I have to make a living, let's just not worry about it. It's all going to end pretty soon any way, let's just sit back and play video games and just wait for it all to happen.

But Paul tells the people, no, you still have to be active. You still need to work. You still need to be involved in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus in Luke's gospel offers us advice, a plan of action when everything seems to be falling apart. The first thing he says is don't go astray. In other words, keep straight. Keep focused. Keep on the purposes that God has entrusted to you. All of these bad things, brothers and sisters are an opportunity for you and for me to testify, to witness to our faith. And what is that? What does that look like?

Jesus is not talking about well crafted theological points. Jesus is not even talking about a well-crafted evangelical message. Jesus says, "Don't even prepare." Don't prepare yourself he says, "Be yourself." You and I were created for this. You and I were created for these moments in history, made in the image of God. You and I were created to love God and love our neighbors, for us to testify, for us to share our hopes and our dreams, our sadness and our sorrows. To give of ourselves actively, enthusiastically, devotedly. To live within God's power and purpose and passion right to the very depths of our hearts. Sometimes the world is going to look like it is a little off kilter, like chaos and the forces of darkness reign, and that doesn't matter what side of the

political spectrum you are for that feeling. And we may not agree, and we may come to difference solutions of the promises and to the problems and the fears that we have. But as the church we have something to say. To speak the truth, to take advantage of these opportunities, to testify to the goodness of God, the grace and mercy and the love that the Savior has for God's people and for the world.

And when we experience suffering or the world gets crazy, God's plan is that we have something to say to anything that is thrown our way. And if we don't know what to say the Holy Spirit of God will give us so many better words than what we can come up with. The presence and the gifts of God can be counted on and not even a hair on our heads will perish through it. God can and will redeem all our heartaches, all our pain, all the conflict, all the loss, all the politics. Jesus offers us renewed hope that you and I can be a part of that redemptive activity that God will surely accomplish. So, no matter what comes, no matter what the world's current situation, no matter who's elected today or tomorrow or the next day, no matter our own personal situations of joy or anxiety, we're never to grow weary of doing what is right.

And faith doesn't wait for someone else to do that work. Faith calls you and I to action, to live headlong into that life. Following Christ in word and deed no matter what. And so, we focus on the good news of Jesus. Of doing what is right and witnessing to the love of God always. Amen

In the name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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