

Luke 21:5-19 – Pentecost XXV

Discipleship: *A New Preparedness*

Focus Question: *If the world would end tomorrow, would you be prepared?*

word of life

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 no go after them.” Luke 21:8 (NRSV)

Read Luke 21:5-19

This passage is considered part of the apocalyptic literature (ie. - writings about the end of time) of the Bible and describes God’s final judgment and redemption. It is part of a larger section (Luke 21:5-38) which focuses on the end of time. Parallels can be found in Mark 13 and Matthew 24:1-44. If you have time, read through each section and make comparisons.

Most people do not spend time pondering if, when, and how the end of the earth might come to pass. Thus, it may be uncomfortable and unsettling to hear Jesus devote precious time and energy to preparing his disciples.

1. *How much time this week did you spend reflecting on the end of time?*
2. *What have you heard about the end of time?*
3. *Why do you suspect we are not more concerned about this?*

The setting for this passage is the temple in Jerusalem. The temple had been destroyed in 587 BC by the Babylonians who took the Jews to live in exile. During the exile, the Jews dreamed of returning to the land promised their ancestors and rebuilding the temple. In 538 BC, under the decree of Cyrus, the Jews were allowed to return. On their return, a high priority was to rebuild the temple. Thus, for Jesus to prophesize about the destruction of the temple would have stirred a strong reaction. (In fact, the Romans would destroy the temple in A.D 70.)

4. *What do you know about the temple?*
5. *What did the temple represent to the people?*

Jesus is concerned about more than a building. He moves beyond the destruction of the temple to discuss the end of all time. All time is included under God’s reign – even the end of time. Jesus warns his followers to be observant in the present time so they might be prepared for God’s judgment. They are to watch for the signs of the end of time, including three significant categories: people who will falsely come in the name of Jesus (Luke 21:8); there will be wars, insurrections (Luke 21:9-10); and the earth will experience earthquakes, famines, and plagues (Luke 21:11). If disciples are too preoccupied then they will miss these signs and not be prepared.

6. *Which of these signs have you witnessed in your lifetime?*
7. *Have you ever seen signs and wondered if the end of time was drawing near?*

Before the end of time occurs, Jesus warns his disciples about their personal struggles. Followers of Jesus will be arrested, persecuted, imprisoned, and hated. Some of the people hating his followers will be their own family members and friends. Those attacked will be given the opportunity to testify, but not to worry. Jesus personally will prepare the words for each person to speak. Jesus is quite serious about his warnings. He does not want followers to be caught off guard and ill-prepared.

8. *What might have been the response of the listeners?*
9. *What is the message for us today?*

word among us

When Hurricane Katrina was heading to the Gulf Coast area in 2005, warnings were issued widely and strongly. Evacuate! Meteorologists were able to track the hurricane and issue clear statements of warning. Fortunately, over a million people safely evacuated their homes and were able to get out of harm's way. Others decided to stay to be with loved ones in the hospital or with their pets. Others chose to ignore the warnings.

1. *Have you ever experienced warnings to leave a dangerous area?*
2. *Did you leave? Describe the situation.*

The winds of Hurricane Katrina eventually became still. People relaxed and believed they had survived the worst. That's when the levees broke open. There was no warning. The water came pouring into vulnerable neighborhoods, forcing people to climb to their attics and rooftops for protection. The hurricane had wiped out much of the communication system in the area, so it was nearly impossible to communicate the severity of the situation. People had prepared for a hurricane, but not the breach in the levees. In some areas the water stayed weeks, turning neighborhoods into lakes. Very slowly, the water receded, leaving unspeakable devastation.

3. *How do you prepare for that which is unexpected?*
4. *After disaster, how does the Christian respond?*

Jesus is quite concerned about disciples being prepared and paying attention to the signs before the end of time. He knows it is easy to become complacent and comfortable with life. At some point, life as we know it will end. God's judgment will come.

Yet, Jesus spoke these words over 2000 years ago. The end has not come. Wars, earthquakes, and devastation have come and gone.

5. *Are you concerned about the end of time?*
6. *What signs would catch your attention?*
7. *Why would God choose to destroy this earth -- now?*

Before the end of time, it will get rough for those who follow Jesus Christ. Disciples will be arrested, persecuted, and even hated. Instead of approaching this time with fear and trembling, disciples are to understand these events to be opportunities for witnessing about Jesus Christ. It may not feel like an opportunity, but that is how God sees it.

8. *Have you even been persecuted or hated because of your faith in Jesus Christ? Describe that situation.*
9. *How might a person witness to Jesus Christ in times of difficulty?*

Jesus promises to fill his followers with the words and wisdom to speak. Don't worry about what you are to say. Wait upon the Spirit to fill you with the words and wisdom of Jesus.

10. *How does waiting and being prepared fit together?*
11. *What might you do this week to prepare for the end of time?*

Prayer

O God, I confess to you my preoccupation with the things of this world. It is hard to look for signs of your reign and the end of time. Keep me alert to your ways. Amen

Dig Deeper

Malachi 4:1-2a



last word

This week take an inventory of your preparation for the coming of Christ.

Daily Discipleship

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