

# Sunday's Sermon

## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

November 13, 2022

The Reverend David E. Fox

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost (Year C) 2022

Luke 21.5-19

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Mom was in the kitchen doing what moms do in the kitchen, and you and your brother or sister decided to do a little horse playing. It always started out as a bit of fun, but then you always tried to see how far you could go and how rough you could get.

The laughing began to turn into fussing. The tickling turned into gouging. Then either you or your brother or sister (probably them because you never started fights) began throwing punches and pulling hair, and the fussing then turned into screaming and yelling.

The next thing you know mom comes dashing in with a glare. "What's going on here?" she would say. And then it would be followed with your sibling being over dramatic as to how they were just minding their own business and that you had just decided to haul off and deck them.

Now mom's glare turned into a scowl and the famous words, "You just wait until your father gets home," entered the room as if the President of the United States were calling for a nuclear attack. "You just wait until your Father gets home."

Our gospel reading for today seems a little apocalyptic, telling us of the end times with phrases like "the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down;" "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes, famines and plagues;" "There will be dreadful signs from heaven;" "You will be arrested and persecuted;" "You will be betrayed and some will even be put to death." These words from Jesus sound like the Left Behind series of books. They sound like what too many people assume the book of Revelation is talking about – the worst.

When Jesus talks about the temple being destroyed, that would seem like the end-all be-all for the folks in Jerusalem. Who could imagine the "House of God" being destroyed?

When Jesus said these things, the temple was still standing. However, by the time Luke wrote this gospel and the hearers heard these words, the temple was already destroyed.

In 66A.D., the Jews began rebelling against the Romans. And in 70A.D., Titus and his legions destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. While in the temple, they stole anything with value and took it back with them to Rome. After selling the valuables, the Romans built their famous Coliseum, known as the Flavian Amphitheater.

By the time Luke wrote this gospel, the Jews were at a loss for hope. The city where they lived and the temple where they worshipped were all destroyed. They were being persecuted by the Romans. And there had just been a major natural disaster, Mt. Vesuvius erupted. For the Jews, they must have been thinking: "You just wait until our Father gets home!"

Pastor Stoffregen reflects, "I think that the time of our text has always been present. When haven't we heard of wars and insurrections somewhere on our planet? When haven't nations and kingdoms fought

against nations and kingdoms? When haven't there been great earthquakes and famines and plagues on earth and unexplainable events in heaven?"

These words became real for us when we witness tragic events. 9/11. The Boston Marathon bombing. Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Sandy. Every time we hear of another school shooting. And when we faced these devastations we heard or thought "You just wait until our Father gets home."

Stoffregen goes on to say, "When mom says, 'You just wait until you father gets home!' is her primary message really about the future event of father coming home or are her words meant to cause a change of behavior in the present?"<sup>ii</sup>

It's probably the latter – she wants our behavior to change right now. The same is true of Jesus' words in this text. He's not talking about how the world will come to an end. Rather, he is wanting to bring about change here and now. Jesus' words are not meant to be apocalyptic and to scare. No, Jesus gives his words as words of hope.

The phrases "For I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict;" and "But not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls," are meant to bring hope for its hearers.

For Jesus' disciples, it meant hope for being such a small group that was set out to change the world and to tell a new story. For Luke's audience, it meant hope when their homes and place of worship were burnt to the ground. And for us, it brings hope as life happens.

Jesus isn't saying, "You just wait until our Father gets home," to scare us into living right. He is saying, "You just wait until our Father gets home," to bring us hope.

When we're dealing with the loss of a job; the loss of a family member; when we are struggling to pay the bills; when we are fighting against cancer or other disease, we need to hear that there will be a time when pain and suffering will be no more. We need to be reminded of the hope and promise of our Father coming home.

Jesus is bringing about a hope where we stick to the convictions of our faith in the midst of opposition. It is easy to believe in God whenever there is this beautiful temple; when everything is so perfect like that of a coastal Virginia sunrise. But, how do we continue to believe in God when the beauty of God's own house is destroyed, when everything is in such disarray like that of a hurricane making landfall.

Jesus is calling us to rely solely on the Father as we struggle through life. Jesus is calling us to witness to others about how he is working in and through our lives even as things seem to be falling apart. Jesus is calling us to stay true to our faith in the midst of life's worst storms.

Within the thought of horrors of the apocalypse, thanks to being misinformed by the Left Behind series and television evangelists – beyond all of their bologna – there is the truth, there is the comforting assurance that God is in control and that God is looking after and protecting the faithful.

When the world is terrified and screaming, we stand firm in our faith knowing that our future is in God's hand<sup>iii</sup>. We are a people watching and waiting for that glorious day when our Father will come home.

Sisters and brothers, Christ is calling us to stand firm in our faith as we endure what life throws our way. These words from our gospel reading are not so much about death and destruction as they are about the hope that our loving Father brings. "You just wait until our Father gets home."

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i Stoffregen, Brian. Crossmarks.com. 11/16/2013.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*