



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 2, 2012

Advent 1

Sermon Text: [Luke 21:25-36](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 19:15-17, 23-29](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 25](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Thessalonians 3:9-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 21:25-36](#)

Prepare to Stand Before The Son of Man

Know when it will be near

Know what draws near

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

When I was growing up, we always went to the 10:30 a.m. service at the church, St. John's in Hemlock. We lived in a split level. You had to go down the steps to the basement. To get to the basement, there was a sliding pocket door. You could always hear throughout the house when that door would open. Dad, for whatever reason, always wanted to be at church about 25 minutes early, I always thought. We always wanted to be at church not quite that early. So as kids, we'd dragged our feet getting ready. I don't know if any of you can even imagine such a thing, kids dragging their feet getting ready for church.

It was a bout a 5 minute drive to church. At about 10:00 a.m. you'd hear that sliding door go, and then you'd hear dad go down the steps. You knew you better get moving pretty quickly now because in about 2 minutes the horn from the car was going to sound. If you weren't down there before the horn stopped echoing, you'd have to face the wrath of dad later on in the day. That sliding pocket door was a sign of the times, that you'd better pay attention.

Signs of the times is what a question was that Jesus' disciples asked him. This is what I read to you from Luke that takes place Tuesday of Holy Week. Earlier in the day he had been in the temple courts. He had been teaching. He had talked about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's, and the question about paying taxes to Caesar had come up. He answered that. He talked about a number of other things. He had seen the widow's offering. They were there in the temple and the disciples got into the discussion of "Boy, these are pretty blocks. This is a pretty building." They got into this big discussion about that, and Jesus tells them, "I tell you, the day is coming when not one block here will be left on another."

The temple at that time was pretty impressive. Herod had been expanding it and finishing it. Herod was a great builder and had done a lot of this. They are marveling at it and Jesus comes up with this bombshell that not one stone is going to be left on

another. So the disciples are kind of shook. They say, "When is it going to happen?! What are the signs going to be?" That twofold question is what Jesus answers in the rest of Chapter 21 in Luke.

As he answers the question, he kind of weaves back and forth between two different events. One is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He says that not one stone is going to be left on another. This is going to be destroyed. This is going to be burned down. In 70 A.D., Titus comes and leads the Roman army and they just destroy everything. In fact, if you go to Rome yet today, right outside the Colosseum (maybe you've seen pictures of it, Titus' Arch), you can see engraved on that arch when they are taking out the candles and the plunder of the temple before they destroy it. It's there yet today. In his answer to the disciples, he's talking about the signs. You'll see people surrounding Jerusalem. When you see it, run to the hills. It's going to be tough in those days if you are pregnant or nursing because you are going to have to flee for your life because the destruction of Jerusalem is right at hand. That takes place just 40 years after Jesus answers the question.

So he talks about that, but he also talks about the destruction of the entire world at the end of the world. He kind of weaves back and forth between the two as he's giving the answer. The questions were, when is it going to happen, and what are the signs?

Today as we look at these words, we are focusing primarily on the section that is going to talk more about the signs of the end of the age. We see that we have to be prepared. We have a big banner that says "prepare." We have one on the balcony with a candle on it that says "prepare." We need to as Christians be prepared because we are going to stand before the Son of Man. That day is going to come. How do we prepare?

He tells us to know when it will be near. Learn the signs so you know when it is. But then he also tells us, know what it is. Know what's coming, and that becomes kind of interesting for us to think about.

Like I said, he's weaving back and forth between these two things. One which was imminent and one which was down the road, which might help us understand what you read in Verse 32 that troubles people at various times. "I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass away until these things take place." You could understand it in a couple different ways.

If he's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, which at times he jumps back and forth without saying "now for a completely different subject," then much of that generation did not pass away. It also could be that the Greek word also talks about race or people. This people, this section of people means generation, or this people in its entirety will not pass away, that God's people will not pass away until the end of the world comes. It could be either thing.

The one thing you have to remember is that in this section he's using a lot of picture

language. In the verses before our text he says, "Here's what's going to happen to you guys before the destruction of Jerusalem. You are going to be betrayed. You are going to be handed over. Some of you are going to be put to death, but don't be afraid. Stand firm because not a hair on your head will perish." If you read that and if you're paying attention, you kind of go "Wait a minute. Their hair is going to keep growing after they're dead?" It says some of you are going to die but not a hair on your head will perish. So it's picture language, right? Even though some of them would die, they would not perish eternally if they stand firm on Jesus Christ. We have to remember here that Jesus is using picture language as well.

"But," he says, "here's a parable. Here's something to think about. When you see the leaves start to blossom and you see the trees turn green, you know summer is coming. So in the same way, when you see these things take place, know the end of the world is getting closer." The "these things" he talks about in greater detail in Matthew, but he talks about some of them here. There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars.

I just had a Bible study recently on Tuesday afternoons looking at God's providence, how God provides for and cares for his creation. One of the things we looked at is things that you and I take for granted, the laws of nature we call them. Things like that. That's really how God has set things up so that he continues to provide for his creation. If he withdrew that hand, the world as we know it would be completely other, completely different. If at the end of the world, right before his return is imminent and he withdraws his hand and the heavenly bodies are not in the places as such, there'll be signs in the sun, moon and the stars, the heavenly bodies will be shaken, that could be what the Lord will do. These signs of the imminence of it he says are really going to have an affect on people. It says men will faint with terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world because things are not as they always have been. Heavenly bodies will be shaken. Strong men will get weak knees, that's what is going to happen as the end draws closer.

He also talks about how nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and the tossing of the sea. Here's one of the things I think we sometimes forget... it's nations, not just where we are living. How often throughout the world in the last few years has there been roaring and tossing of the seas, tsunamis? Didn't we just have something like that on the East coast? Right? Did that cause some strong men to have weak knees as they looked at the devastation?

So when you see the trees bud, know summer is coming. When you see the signs come, don't just throw up your hands and say "What's the world coming to? This is terrible. Everything is falling apart." Your Lord is really telling you to use those signs to say your Savior is coming again. Am I ready? Am I prepared? Am I ready to meet him? That's what God tells us these things are there for, so that we know that it's coming, so that we are ready.

What gets you ready? What makes you ready? What do you have to do so that you're ready for Jesus to return? The obvious answer is nothing, right? God does it all. God

sent his Son to live in your place and die in your place. God took away every last one of your sins. You don't take away your sins. God does it. That's the truth. So when you see these signs, what should be the obvious answer? To focus on your God. Not to focus on yourself. Not to focus on your troubles. Not to focus on the things that worry you or make you strong or knees weak. Focus on who God is and what he has done for you and the amazing love he has for you.

The fact of the matter is that you and I don't always pay attention to the signs. You and I go on in our life and we think things will always be as they always have been. We are kind of confused at times because we go on as though nothing will ever change. Then two seconds later we're saying "Things change so much, I can't stand it!" We are kind of confused because we are always just looking at ourselves and we're looking at what's around us and we forget to look at our God.

Things are always going to change around us. We live in a world that's ruined by sin. The effects of sin means there is going to be trouble and sorrow, there is going to be difficulty, there is going to be hardship. We shouldn't be surprised at it. The Lord says it over and over in Scripture. So if we see the signs, we should flee to the Scriptures to see what the good Lord says because he is the One that is in control. He tells us to expect those things. He tells us that very often we are going to be distracted. We don't put him first all the time. We put ourselves first. We think only about how everything affects us because we are sinful wretches. We are selfish. We are arrogant. We are full of ourselves and we don't want to look at God because we love looking at ourselves.

When we look at our God, what do we see? We see a God who says, "I see your sins. I know the sins you hide from each other. I know them. I know your thoughts. I know your words. I even know the words you mutter under your breath that no one else hears. I know what wretched people you are and how you deserve to go to hell, but I fixed it. I sent Jesus. He lived in your place and died in your place and because you're all A.D.D. to one extent or another and you don't focus on who Jesus is and what he's done for you enough, I've not only given you the Word, I've also given you the Sacrament so that you can come and receive in, with and under the bread and the wine the very body and blood that was poured out for you so that you know that your sins are forgiven."

Did you hear that when you sang that in the Psalm this morning? It's a fascinating phrase in this morning's Psalm. Did you pay any attention to it or were you just thinking about lunch? "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways." Did you notice that when you sang that? Did you kind of get a little bit of guilt wave coming over you? "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways." That's why David says "Show me your paths Lord." Because when we try going on our own paths, we get arrogant and full of ourselves and our paths lead us away from God. That's why God has these signs out there. God is really screaming at us, "Turn back and look at me!"

When we see these signs in nations and we see these signs in nature and we see these signs in the church (as he talks about in Matthew of false prophets) he says,

“Don’t get so discouraged. Instead, turn to me.” When we turn to him, even when Satan is whispering “Your God can’t love you because you did this, this and this,” our God says, “This is my body. This is my blood. It’s for the forgiveness of your sins. Don’t ever think I won’t forgive you.” That’s what prepares us.

We need to be prepared. That’s what our Lord says to us. He says when he returns, know the signs so you can see that it’s coming, but when he returns, he says it’s one of two things. In what I read to you from Luke, it’s one of two things. It’s either going to be (1) lift up your heads because your redemption is near, or (2) it’s going to be a trap. Did you notice that in the last paragraph, Verses 34 and following, in what I read to you? “Be careful or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.” Dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life.

When you see some of the signs of the end of the world coming, they are frightening, they are horrifying, they are terrifying, and they weigh us down. They are a burden. The anxieties of life that come from living in a world that’s sinful weigh us down and they burden us and they trouble us. Some people deal with it with dissipation and drunkenness.

Dissipation is a fun word to say, isn’t it? It’s not a fun word to experience though. The picture that lies behind this word “dissipation” is the physical effect of drunkenness. You’ll be weighed down with headaches. That’s clearly what it’s saying. You’ll be weighed down with the effects of trying to self medicate with bottles or pills, to try to escape from the difficulties of life. We’re not talking about medicine prescribed by doctors because you need it because of the effects of sin in the world. We are talking about someone that just sits on the barstool until someone tells them to get off it.

Most of you know when I go on vacation out in South Dakota I spend most of my time in my brother-in-law’s bar. I enjoy it. I like people. But I see a lot of people that are trying to deal with life’s problems the exact wrong way. All I see it do is bring more troubles into their life. The more troubles that come, the more weighed down we are with the anxieties of this life. I fear some of these people I’ve grown to know and to love, that if the end of the world is going to come, it’s going to spring on them like a trap. That’s what it’s going to bring... God’s judgment on the whole world. That’s what the verse said. “For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth.”

When he came the first time, he showed up in one area at one place for 30-some years. When he comes again, he’s going to gather all people of all time together, and he is going to judge the world. So when you’re ready to face that judgment, it’s not a problem. But if you’re not, if you’re distracted by the everyday things of life, if you once stood in front of this altar and said “I’d rather die than lose my faith in Jesus,” but then you walked out and lost your faith, that day is going to come on you like a trap. There are no more second chances. There’s no phone a friend. There’s none of that. That’s it. So he says, “Watch the signs so it’s not a trap and instead the day of your redemption.” When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads

because your redemption is drawing near.

If you went through instruction class, you learned that the word “redeem” means to buy back. Redemption then is the act of buying back. Jesus has bought us back as we always say from sin, death and the devil. He’s redeemed us. He’s delivered us. He bought us back from the guilt of our sins and the punishment of our sins, which is hell. It says here, “when he comes, your redemption is near.” He’s already bought us back, so it’s talking about redemption in a different sense. The final goal of your redemption. We will be with the Lord forever. We will be free from the effects of all sins. It’s our final deliverance. If our eyes see the signs and our hearts turn to our God, we are focused on our God, and then we can lift up our heads because we are ready. It’s not a trap. It’s what we are waiting for. It’s what we long for.

If Christ returns and you haven’t gotten to live your whole life and all that, you aren’t going to be sitting in heaven going “Man, I wish I would have gotten to grow up longer on earth,” or “I wish I would have gotten to do this or that.” You’re going to be in heaven. It will be a joy beyond our imagining. This world will be a long-past memory. That’s what our God tells us.

It’s not a sliding door. It’s signs in the sun, moon and stars. It’s not a car horn. It’s the horn of the archangel and the trumpet call of God that he has returned. The question is, are you ready? Amen.