

Sermon Notes November 13th, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 21:5-19

Scripture: Luke 21:5-19, NRSV

5 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, **6** “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

7 They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”

8 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 not go after them.

9 “When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” **10** Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; **11** there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

12 “But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. **13** This will give you an opportunity to testify. **14** So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, **15** for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. **16** You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. **17** You will be hated by all because of my name. **18** But not a hair of your head will perish. **19** By your endurance you will gain your souls.

Sermon

In this passage, we are reminded of two words that have much significance in our lives: faith and hope. Before we jump into this text, I want us to be reminded that we began this reading in verse five and what occurred in the first four verses can help shape our discussion.

In the first four verses, Jesus had just highlighted that the poor widow who put in two copper coins in the treasury has just given more than everyone else. He shares with them that this is because she gave all that she had to live on while the rich were giving out of their abundance. This response would once again be very shocking to those who heard these words. It would be another head scratcher. Jesus had a way to shock his audience with the words that he spoke.

Following Jesus sharing this news, the disciples were in awe with the temple and how beautiful it was. This temple was definitely great. Herod went over the top to build a beautiful place. The majestic structure expressed his wealth and his civic generosity.

However, Jesus shifts gears and shares how this grand temple will be destroyed. In his teaching, I believe that Jesus is pointing to the temple and cautioning his listeners against putting their trust in false hopes and limited powers.

This passage is a very difficult passage. As I was contemplating what I wanted to share with you, I thought that I might have to deconstruct some of the thoughts that most individuals hold onto. When individuals hear the message that we read today, many folks think of the end times. However, I think that it is crucial for us to step back into the first century first and after hearing and learning from the first-century lens, then we can step back into our twenty-first century world.

When we step back into the first century, we should realize that the Gospel of Luke was finally written down somewhere between 80 and 90 AD. Thus, the temple that Jesus predicted would be destroyed has already happened. The readers in the first-century would not only have seen the temple destroyed but they have also experienced major earthquakes, volcano eruptions and a severe famine. This was their present-day experience, not something in the future.

The destruction of the temple can be a hard conversation as well. Why did this occur? When Luke shared the prophecy that Jesus gave of the destruction and razing of temple, he was offering us a radical reinterpretation of the event. I want you to think about this for a moment. Can you imagine the stories that were being told about the temple's destruction when it had just occurred ten to fifteen years earlier? Luke's reinterpretation of the events that transpired then means that the destruction of the temple was not evidence of God's rejection and disfavor. No. Instead, it was the fulfillment of God's plan.

I also think that Luke wanted them to know that the Spirit of God transcends buildings and structures. Thus, lean into the Holy Spirit. Maybe, he also wanted them to turn their attention, to people, especially the poor and not on the temple building.

With the reshaping, the story shifted. The shift could be perceived as a radical shift. The individuals hearing the story through this lens could now let go of their anxiety. They were constantly looking over their shoulder to see if God was going to reject them, yet again. This constant looking over their shoulder produced great anxiety. With the story being reframed, the anxiety that they held onto could now be replaced with expectation and hope.

The messages to Luke's original audience was the following: When you look at the temple rubble, you do not have to allow terror to take a grip on your life. Instead, you can have trust. I know that these are polar opposite feelings. His message continues to them that they can have trust because Jesus said that all of this was going to happen. Luke wanted them to know that when they looked at the rocks that they should not see disaster. He was reassuring them that it may appear that God's work and plan has been undermined, but that is not the truth. He wanted them to know that despite the situation looking like it is disastrous; that they can see very clearly that God is still in charge. God is faithful. Because of that, you should remain faithful to God.

I think that is still a great message for us today. We need to realize that God is still in charge and when we look at what is happening in our world and churches today that we can still have expectations and hope. Two weeks ago, as a church, we took a look at our strengths, weaknesses, opportunity and the threats that are swirling around. Over the next few weeks and months, we will dive into them more. When we dive deeper into them and put action steps in place, we can have great expectations for the future and we can have hope that we will achieve the results and we can have assurance that God is going to be walking with us every step of the way. God will be faithful.

Faithfulness is one of the striking components of this text for me. When we step back and take a look at the full narrative of God's faithfulness, it is in the midst of distress and persecution. When we take a look at our world today, it seems like we are constantly receiving discouraging news and there seems to be individuals running around with bullhorns screaming negativity. I am not sure about you but I imagine that there are times that you mutter the words, "this is too overwhelming." This is where hope and trust are difficult but oh so necessary.

Here is the struggle as I try to put this whole story together for us.

When we take a look at the full chapter, we see Jesus highlighting the widows self-sacrificing giving. We then see Jesus and the disciples in the temple. The temple's ultimate message was the following: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength. Then, we hear about the time of the world where individuals are yearning for something, even though they are not sure what they are yearning for. There is weakness and brokenness in individuals lives. Then, no matter where we turn, we see uncertainty and we simply do not know what to do.

So, the church needs to be a witness in this time. I think it is time for us as church communities to step up and live out this ethic of disciplined love. This love is for God and neighbor.

We are able to love our neighbor when we live out our baptismal promise of serving all people following the example of Jesus.

As I get ready to land this sermon, I have to be honest and tell you that I rewrote the sermon multiple times yesterday. There were so many different directions that I could have gone. Sometimes, in my mind, I think about doing a Monday post on, here is what was cut from the sermon.

I have decided to conclude with a challenge. The challenge of living out the baptismal promise of serving all people. The last few weeks, we have seen text on poor, hungry and the marginalized. We, at Bay View, are blessed. We have the opportunity to connect with our community in multiple ways over the next few weeks and I want to highlight them.

There is still time for you to make some purchase for Feed My People. Grab a list of items if you are not sure what they need, and make a purchase and bring them to the altar.

This past week through conversations, we have made a renewed connection with N E W Door Sober Living and we are going to be the host site for their Thanksgiving Meal on Thursday. Food will be served from 11 – 6. I want to encourage you to come and eat with some of our neighbors. If you want to help with a donation, you can bring rolls. There are also opportunities to help volunteer on that day.

Then, very soon, the Christmas tree will be going up in the Narthex and we can grab a card and buy some gifts for our children in the community.

Friends, this is just the tip of the iceberg on how we can serve and care for our community and love our neighbor. We have the opportunity to make a major impact in our neighborhood. Let us seize the opportunity and be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in Door County.

I then want us to challenge our minds and think of ways that we can use the great building that we have for the community.

Now, as we depart from this place, may we make sure that we are clinging onto hope. The hope is that God will remain present in the world and in one's life even when things have gotten so bad that it feels like the world is closing in on us.

God's peace and blessings.