

Luke 21:25-36  
Up All Night and Ready  
Sunday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent. Advent is the 4 weeks of preparation before the start of the Christmas season. I know our secular culture makes this time feel like the Christmas season and when Christmas finally arrives, it feels like the “Post Christmas Season”.

But in the Christian Church, Advent is a period of preparation leading up towards Christmas. This is the time we get ready!



How many have started Christmas preparations by doing some shopping already? You hit the “Black Friday Sales”? How many have started preparing for Christmas and Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> coming through prayer, watchfulness and purposeful living?

Hard question to answer right off the bat, but if you are here today to worship Christ you have already started.

The message of our scripture today is to be ready for Christ’s return. The promise is that if we are ready, the disasters of present life will not overwhelm us.

Now let’s look at our scripture. Our scripture can be divided into 3 parts.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> part**, verses 25-28, tell us to be hopeful! The disasters that are signs of Christ’s return are in fact signs that our redemption is near. This first section is often titled “**The Coming of the Son of Man**”.

In **the 2<sup>nd</sup> part**, verses 29-33, Jesus tells us to have the same hope in these signs that you have in the hope of the return of summer when

you see leaves sprouting on trees. This section is titled “**The Lesson of the Fig Tree**”.

**The third part** is verses 34-36 where Jesus says in essence, “**In the meantime watch and pray.**” Live your life with purpose and hope. Don’t waste your life away being drunk or stoned.”

These verses indeed are a prophecy of Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Christ’s return will be preceded by unmistakable signs seen in the heavens and on earth and in the seas. And when Christ returns the scriptures say, “**They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and glory.**” Through the centuries this verse has inspired many heroic depictions.



The point here is that when Christ returns no one will be able to mistake his final return!!! In the meantime and preceding his return there will be wars and rumors of war, great persecutions of Christians, famines, earthquakes, diseases and the list of disasters as “signs” of Christ’s return goes on and on. In fact in many ways it looks like this morning’s paper and sounds like the evening news!

But curiously for believers who are prepared, Jesus tells us to **not be afraid** and “**faint from fear and apprehension**”, but to “**stand up and raise your heads for your redemption is drawing near.**”

Many movies use a climactic battle scene where at first all seems lost, but through the battle good finally triumphs over evil. You can see this of theme, taken straight from the scriptures in the final battle scenes in movies like Independence Day, Matrix Revolution, Lord of the Rings etc.



This is the type of climatic situation that Christ is calling us to stand up in- to stand up on our faith and look up to God and have joy and hope because redemption draws near even in the present disasters of life. Even among the current threats of terrorism, climate change, masses of refugees fleeing all around the world.

In fact in the 2<sup>nd</sup> section, verses 29-33 of our scripture today, we hear Jesus' last parable, the parable of the fig tree. **“Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.”** which was a great positive sign for those living without central heat.

Jesus is saying for those who are ready these signs of the end are not cause for “fear and foreboding and fainting,” but for “hope, praise and joy.” Because all the present trials and tribulations will soon be over. They will disappear along with the “heavens and earth.”

All will go away, but Christ's promise to us will remain. His word to us that we will be with him forever more will remain. The Kingdom of God will come and **‘Jesus will wipe away every tear and there will be no more mourning, nor crying, nor death, nor pain for the former order of things has passed away.’**

This Advent season we celebrate the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies of Christ coming to earth as the baby Jesus. We remember the 1000s of years of waiting for Christ to appear. We take hope, that just as the ancient prophecies were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ that Jesus will return.



So what do we do in the meantime? The scripture says clearly to watch like a parent up all night with a sick child or be ready like a guard. But what if my generation, this generation, is not the one in which Christ returns and the world is judged?

My friends, for each and every one of us we will be at the Judgment, whether the Judgment is today, or in 10,000 years from today, or 10 million years. As Jesus says in verse 35, **“For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.”**

All humans will face the Judgment. Each and every one of us will be at the Judgment when Christ returns.

Hebrews 9:27 says, **“We die once and then there is the Judgment.”**

We don't have to live through what many call “the end times” or “tribulation” and experience the signs Christ mentions in today's scripture in order to arrive at the Judgment Seat of God.

When our earthly life ends; we are there! When we die we are judged. We only live one life and then it is judged. We do not come back again and again in many forms.



And for Christians The Judgement is a time of victory as we stand on the winners platform and receive the crown of life.

But many will still ask, **“When are the end times coming?”** “When will these scriptures be fulfilled?” One wise writer put it this way, **“The question of ‘when’ is always answered ‘now’ in the scriptures.”**

We don't have to wait days or years or centuries to stand up and see that our redemption draws near. Today we can stand and **“if we confess with our mouth and believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord and was raised from the dead we are saved.”**

We have moved from death, fear and fainting to life and praise and power. We can stand and look up and not cringe and cower in fear. We can live victorious lives here on earth.

But then again the question is asked, “What do we do in the meantime?” The 3<sup>rd</sup> part of our scripture, verses 34-36 address this question today. Verse 34 says, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.

Basically as one author put it “Live as if Christ were returning tomorrow and plan as if he wasn’t coming back for 10 years.”

If you knew Christ was coming back tomorrow I feel most in the room would try to cleanse their lives of all sin this day. Those of no faith would simply try to achieve the biggest high between now and then if they did anything at all.

But Christ here is calling us to be ready for His return by living sober lives of purpose. “Carousing” means to live a wasteful, sinful life indulging the sinful appetites; seeking wealth and riches to simply squander them rather than use them in God’s service and in the service of others.

A life lived in “carousing” is simply wasted away. It is a life that misses God’s purpose for it. And yes, God has a purpose for all of us. A life lived in “carousing” is a “wasted life”. A life lived in drunkenness or substance abuse is not achieving its God given purpose and is literally “wasted away.”

Jesus also calls us to “be ready’ by living a life without concentration on our worries.

The 1<sup>st</sup> section of our scripture told us to “stand and lift our heads in the midst of the terrible signs of the end”, in other words- don’t worry.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> section of our scripture told us that indeed we could rejoice in these signs as those who rejoice in the sign of the fig tree leaves sprouting, signaling the end of the cold of winter and the coming of the warmth of summer- again don’t worry.

In fact inverse 32, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”

This scripture is Jesus’ word to each and every generation that comes upon this earth. Each and every generation is faced with signs and wonders of some sort in the heavens and on earth. And there are earthquakes, diseases, and pestilence in each and every generation.

Every generation is faced with wars and rumors of wars and Christians are persecuted in various places around the world. Remember the morning paper and evening news? In fact more Christians died for their faith in the last century than the preceding 19.

So time and time again people have declared Jesus is returning soon when in reality we are returning to Him!!



We all must face the question of Christ’s return or our returning to Christ. Each and every person must face the worries of life, the temptation to carousing and the drowning of our sorrows in alcohol or drugs, substances, work, or activities. You can remain cold sober and yet still live a life of carousing if you waste your life in idle pursuits.

The world will face its’ judgment and we, too, need to face our own judgment and fears. In the midst of all this Jesus calls us to be ready for “the end” and the blessing in the meantime.

The blessing of being ready for “the end” is that we are made ready to live in the present. Our lives take on meaning and purpose and we avoid the carousing/dissipation and worries of this life. We are able to stand and look up and beyond our current problems to a redemption that will one day come as surely as Christ arrived the 1<sup>st</sup> time.

Jesus gave one simple action for us to be ready for the disasters of life that feel like “the end” times as well as being ready for Christ’s return and that word/action is Pray! In the third section, negatively, Jesus says to avoid carousing/dissipation, drunkenness and worry. Positively he says pray.

The mystery is that Jesus is not only in some future far off cataclysmic event when all creation comes to an end and is reborn. Jesus is here with us right now as we pray.

It is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ that strengthens our faith, and our ability to stand in the face of life’s defeats and disasters, disappointments and difficulties; our own end times. It is prayer that nurtures our relationship with Jesus Christ and matures it.

The following is a true story about prayer in the midst of life’s disappointments that I was given permission to tell in order to encourage people to pray. A woman I know, and her husband, for a long time, in fact for years tried to conceive a baby. Finally, a baby was conceived as the result of deep and heartfelt prayer.

Sometimes God just lets us know in unmistakable way that he has answered prayer. In the midst of a worship service in an almost audible way it was revealed to this woman by God that she was going to have a baby and she did.

This child was received as a total gift from God. This child’s mother told me that if this child ever died before her there would be nothing but rejoicing on her part for the gift of that child that was given her. Such faith only comes through prayer.

She said, in the midst of what would be a parent’s absolute worst heartache and disaster; she would be able to stand up, and look up, and know that one day she would be reunited with her child.

Another woman told me of the death of almost every living relative she had in the space of 10 years, 22 people in all including her

husband, children, nieces, nephews and friends. And yet she stood in faith and wrote of her experiences to help others hang on in the midst of the tribulations of life.

This is the preparation of our heart that Christ asks for here, **“whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”** Whether wealth and riches and family and happiness and health follow us all the days of our lives or poverty, loneliness and the death of all we hold dear, we are the Lord’s. This attitude of the heart, this faith Jesus asks us to develop through prayer.

My friends, these scriptures speak of a time that is not yet, but will be. In the meantime live your life with purpose and pray!!!

And then you will be ready.

Ready for Christ’s return.

Ready for going to meet Christ.

Ready to stand victorious when all that life can throw at you happens.

You will be able to stand and not be broken.

In the name of: The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen!

Let us pray,

Dear God, in our midst, are people who have been crushed, broken, chewed up and spit out by life. There are those who have wandered lost and purposeless in life. We pray for them all. Strengthen them through their prayer to you. Call some to sobriety and purpose in life, strengthen others who waver in their decision. Prepare all to meet the challenges of life and your return. And for those who have yet to commit to you I ask that they commit their lives to you.



In fact, I say to anyone here if you feel called to commit your life to Jesus Christ and receive purpose and hope in your life pray this prayer silently with me and then speak with me or our Stephen Minister after the service.

“Lord I thank you for forgiving me my sins.

I commit my heart my life my all to you.

I thank you now for giving my life purpose, hope and an eternal home. In Jesus' Name. Amen.