

Luke 21:5-19 **Here and Now**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:

Do you like Chinese food? I love it! When we go out to eat, one of my favorite places is a Chinese restaurant. After you finish eating, they always bring some fortune cookies. When you break them open they have a little strip of paper with your fortune on it. Here are some examples of what they might say:

- * Good things are coming your way.
- * Success will be yours at school and at play.
- * You will have a pleasant surprise soon.
- * You will make very good choices today.
- * The time is right to make new friends.
- * Something you lost will turn up soon.
- * You will do something soon that will make your family proud.
- * You will live a long, happy life.

When you read your fortune from a fortune cookie, do you believe it? We might get a good laugh out of some of them, but it is foolish to think that a piece of paper in a fortune cookie could tell what is going to happen in your future.

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus had some things to say about people who claimed that they could predict the future. Jesus and his disciples were in the temple and were talking about how beautiful it was when Jesus said to them, "The time is coming when all these things will be completely destroyed. Not one stone will be left on top of another!"

The disciples were a little frightened by what Jesus said. "When will that happen?" the disciples asked. "What signs can we look for that will show us that these things are about to take place?"

"Don't let anyone mislead you," Jesus answered. "Many will say, 'The time has come!' But don't believe them." You see, Jesus knew that these people could not see into the future. Only God can do that!

There are some people today who think that they can see into the future. They may say some frightening things, but we need to remember what Jesus taught his disciples. "Don't worry!" he said. "You will be saved by being faithful to me."

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, we don't know what the future holds, but we know that you hold the future. We know that we will be safe when we put our faith and trust in you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

Yesterday, my husband and I were scrolling through channels on the TV after the girls went to bed, trying to find something to watch and we came across a show called “Doomsday Preppers” on the Discovery Channel. Have you seen it? Fascinating, really. This show is all about people who spend their lives prepping for the end times. They devote their entire lives on this earth to gathering supplies and stock-piling them...and they build underground bunkers and safeguard their houses all so that they make sure they will survive when the rest of the world can not.

After reading our Gospel text for today, it doesn’t seem like it’s that far-fetched of an idea! In today’s gospel, Luke shares a story with us where Jesus talks about famines and plagues...wars, trials and tribulations...pretty depressing words about the end times. What on earth are we to do with this text?

Well, like I said, one thing I suppose we could do is to take these words as warnings and start prepping for the end times, such as the doomsday preppers do.

Or we could spend our time with calendars and consult the Mayans and try to figure out when these “end time events” will occur. Then we could order our lives in a new way based off of predictions, and spend our lives trying to figure out the events and calendar to which Jesus supposedly alludes as to when these end times will occur.

It’s true...these are things that we could do after reading this text that we read today. But I don’t think that’s what Jesus had in mind for us. You see, it’s easy for us to get caught up on the scary and disturbing images in today’s reading, so much so that we can easily overlook some important things that Jesus says throughout this apocalypse description...such as in verse 9, when Jesus says, “When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified.” And Verse 14: “So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, for I will give you words and a wisdom.” And Verse 18: “Not a hair of your head will perish.” And Verse 19: “By your endurance, you will gain your souls”

So instead of focusing on the frightening signs and events that Jesus is talking about in our Gospel story today, we can chuck all that and hear these words as an invitation to live *now* by faith and hope, inviting the prospect of future tribulation and trial only to sharpen our deep appreciation for the present times that God has created and given to us as a gift.

To live in the now. By faith and hope. What might that look like for us personally? What might that look like for us as a congregation?

There’s a marvelous TED Talk out there right now by Candy Chang. TED talks, if you’re not familiar with them, are simply talks of inspiration. TED.com has become a popular website where videos of these inspirational speakers can be found and used by companies and organizations as a motivational means.

Candy Chang is a great motivational speaker who has many of these TED talks out. She is a well known artist, designer, and urban planner, who regularly creates art in public spaces for others to enjoy. She also has the gift of using her art as a means to her motivational speaking.

In this TED talk, Chang discusses a challenging time in her life, when she was deeply affected by the death of a dear friend. Through her art, she grieved. During one project that she did, Chang transformed a dilapidated house in her neighborhood of New Orleans into a public and massive chalk board where she invited people to respond to one question. "Before I die I want to ..." and people could fill in the blanks with chalk as they walked by the massive chalk board.

The answers that people wrote on those blank lines were moving...they were honest...some even funny, and most of them were insightful. Chang took a chance and used her gift of art to reach out to people to help them name what it is that they wanted to do while they were still living in the here and now on this earth.

I wonder what I would write on that chalk board. I wonder what this church would write. "What is it that God is calling us to do while we are still living in the here and now on this earth?"

I know at least part of what God is calling this church to do is being lived out already!! We are a church called to our mission, which is, **"Welcoming all to Jesus Christ through intergenerational worship, Christian Education, local service and global outreach."**

In there here and now of our lives, we are teaching our young children about God and the love of Christ, we are helping our teenagers grow into an understanding of their faith, we are involving our adults into the continual journey of faith that we are called to live out in our every day lives...and we are reaching out, engaging in local service and global outreach.

This church is a building where we have women's groups, men's' breakfasts, Sunday school events, confirmation programs, choir groups, a community meal, and a food shelf! We are a vessel for providing boxes for Lutheran Social services, for the Kuanna Mission, and the soup kitchen! We sent money to our brothers and sisters in the Philippines last week after the Typhoon that uprooted their world.

And we don't let God's mission for us to be confined by these walls! No sire! We are a congregation who talks about God to neighbors, invites our co-workers to come to church, and bring friends to coffee house after school! In fact, some of our new members that we received into this congregation a couple of weeks ago are here because their neighbor, someone who is a part of this congregation, wouldn't stop pestering them to come for over 5 years!!!

And this past week, I had a conversation with one of our beloved members who visits her neighbor every week after church and brings this single mother a copy of the sermon and tells her she should just come and check it out sometime.

People, God is working through this congregation...through you...in more ways than you may even know! In more ways than I even know! Your open hearts and open minds make way for others to experience Christ and the love that he gives us and the hope that he promises us like they have never experienced it before! Be proud of that. Take ownership of that. And continue to live the life that God is calling you...calling us to live in the here and now life.

Today, this church begins to talk about next year and our financial situation. We heard a temple talk today about consecration Sunday/Saturday/Wednesday...we've all received letters in the mail about the ministry that we will be celebrating and looking forward to, and the financial

responsibilities that go along with that. While we look forward to the opportunities and ministry that we continue to get to be a part of and grow in, we also look towards finishing this year out strong with our financial gifts as we celebrate the day to day work that God does in and through this congregation.

God is at work. Ministry is being done. People's lives are being touched and the love of Christ is being shared! But if you look at the numbers in our bulletin today, you'll see that our money isn't keeping up with our ministry. We as a church are significantly behind in our budgeted giving for the year. I believe with all my heart that God continues to call this church into the amazing ministry and mission that we are all about...as witnesses of His love to this community...to God's own people. What an honor and privilege for us that we are a part of God's mission in this world! That we have a part in changing the lives business through the love of Christ!

God will provide this congregation the means to continue on in this mission and ministry. Through prayer and the gifts that are entrusted to us by God himself, we have the means to make our budgeted expenses and to continue living out that which God is calling us to do.

Our Gospel lesson is a call to faithful living, to endurance, to hanging in through tough times, to having faith in the God who has faith in us. It's about building our life into a dwelling for God. And we move from that to making our congregation a place where God rules in every heart, where Christ's love motivates all actions, where we remember it's about God and not about us.

Living for God today can change our priorities. All of a sudden, we value people more than things. We spend more time with God and less time by ourselves. We treasure our families – both at home and in our church. And what's more, God richly blesses us and gives us more and more to be thankful for in order to live out His mission in this world. In the here and now of His kingdom.

Amen.

By the way, if you are interested in seeing the full TED talk and the chalkboard art that Candy Chang created for her community, we will be showing the 6 minute talk immediately following worship up on the screens.