

Written Copy: Luke 21:34-36 "Does He Have Your Attention?"

1st Sunday in Advent

Sunday, November 28th, 2021

Text: Luke 21:34-36

³⁴ "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.
³⁶ But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Exegetical Statement (the text's context)

Jesus is informing His disciples then and now what they can expect to happen if they are left on earth in the days just before His return. There will be natural events and cosmic events that are beyond what we will imagine, amounting to the very fabric of reality being shaken. This will cause the unbelieving world great fear and distress. And then all will witness Jesus, the Son of Man spoken prophetically about by Daniel returning to visibly with power and great glory to completely and fully assume the reign and rule given Him by the Father. While the reaction of the unbelieving world is great fear, we who are confirmed and living in faith are to raise up our heads in joyful expectation and rejoice in this fulfillment of God's promised redemption of creation and His children. We should see all the signs leading up to this that He has been discussing as fulfillment of His Word which will not pass away, unlike the words, plans, and promises of the unbelieving world and its leaders. Jesus solemnly promises this end of all things will come and the unbelievers left on the earth will most certainly witness it all. He admonishes us not to become like the seed in the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:14) that is weighed down and allows the cares and temptations of the world to replace their faith and trust in Christ and His Word that never passes away. Otherwise, all these things will fall upon us like a trap, and there will be no time or presence of mind to seek out faith again. So, we are to remain watchful of ourselves and one another through prayer and use of the means of grace by which the Holy Spirit keeps us safe and secure in faith.

Focus Statement:

Christ gives us this head up warning not to scare us into submission but so that we see the current and future troubles in the light of faith, as confirmation of all His promises to us, especially the promise that He will return to gather all those who believe with Him into eternal life. He points to Himself as the One promised in Daniel who comes to reign and rule forever bringing with Him His redemption of all things. By the faith He gives in His Word that will never pass away, we can receive Him with joy and hope in what is coming.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

There are plenty of things going on in the world around us that can act as weeds to choke out the faith we have, especially if we separate ourselves from the means of grace which the Spirit uses to keep us in faith. As things grow worse we could find ourselves giving into the despair of the unbelieving world and look to human institutions which promise to make everything right instead of the LORD who promises to carry us through all the problems that must come

What the hearer should do as a result:

The Holy Spirit is the means by which we will avoid having our faith choked out succumbing to the distress of the world. But we are to do our part by participating in the means He uses to do so, studying and reflecting on His Word, and our participation in the Sacraments. Through these means He will make sure we stand before our Savior and enter with Him into Eternal Life.

Subject Sentence: Allow the Spirit to keep you in faith to life everlasting

Introduction: Does Jesus Have Your Attention?

(Spend a few moments fumbling around at the pulpit, setting up my phone to time the sermon, pretending to look at emails, posts, texts, with quiet humming and murmurings. Then with a loud voice announce) **GOOD MORNING LAMB OF GOD!**

Do I have your attention? I don't want any of you to drift off just yet. I know that some may be suffering from "full belly syndrome" eating your way through the leftovers from Thanksgiving. Some of you may have gone out to breakfast this morning and perhaps the pancakes, French Toast, eggs, and bacon have settled in and are making you drowsy. Or perhaps you had a hard night of it last night and your wanting to sneak in a little shut eye before you head out for your Christmas shopping. I would certainly like your attention for the next 20 minutes. But more importantly, does Jesus have your attention?

He would like your attention this morning just like He had the disciple's attention in our Gospel Lesson today. How can you know He had their attention? Look back to **Luke 21: 5-7** ⁵ **And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said,** ⁶ **"As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."** ⁷ **And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"** He had their attention when He told them that their beautiful temple with the huge, magnificent stones would be totally destroyed. They were thinking, "That was God's house on earth! Who could do such a thing? When Jesus, when will this take place? And how will we know when that day is approaching?" Yes, He had their attention. Now, does He have yours?

Pay Attention to the Warnings

Jesus proceeds to tell His disciples both then and now what must come to pass before He returns again in glory on the Last Day. Much of this I imagine you've heard before, and much of this is already happening as we speak. He talks about wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nation, natural disasters, the love of man growing cold, people turning against fellow citizens, neighbors, friends, family. False teachers claiming to be from Jesus, claiming to preach a new and better word or gospel that is anything but the gospel, but instead is a message from the pits of hell. In Revelation Jesus gives to John additional information on these times such as that all of these things will come on strong, then recede, then return only to be more amped up, more serious. He even warns us of the famous "Rider on the Black Horse" which symbolizes famine and plagues that is allowed to go out and affect ever increasing portions of the globe, plagues such as COVID-19 that we see ramping up once again. Now, does He have your attention?

I began to understand how much of a worry this is to the general public when I was sitting at infusion yesterday morning. One of the nurses was worrying over this new COVID variant from Africa, and how there was talk of locking things down again, and on top of this the shortage of nurses in hospitals where they have mandated COVID-19 vaccinations and nurses and other health care workers have walked off the job. Add to this the other news stories concerning racial unrest, political quarreling, fears about climate change as well as how the government plans to combat it, how it could adversely affect the economy, and as you can see we are a nation with a boat load of things to worry about.

But perhaps you might respond, "Yes, I've heard all these things. But science and medicine have come up with the solution in the past and will do so in the future. As far as the other problems go, we just need to elect or reelected more (*Pick the person or party of your choice*) and they will set things right again."

No matter which side of that fence you fall on, worry or confidence, Jesus wants you to pay attention to these words of warning: **Luke 21:34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.** Watch yourselves, lest the events going on around you and in your life move you to either, in fear of what is to come, or in false confidence placed in men, take your focus off the One it needs to be in: Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you think, "That could never happen to me." But if that is spoken in self-confidence instead of faith, then you should consider the warning Jesus gave in His Parable of the Sower: **Luke 8:13-14 ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.** These too all believed at some point. But they allowed their faith to be replaced by self-confidence, or trust in something other than God. Then when the times of testing came, when the cares, concerns, and the pleasures of this world became too strong, their faith was choked out.

But perhaps you are wondering how this could ever happen to you, a lifelong Lutheran? You are safe as long as you are doing what is necessary to feed your faith. But when the world around us turns crazy and presses in on us, the devil is there at work feeding our fear, our doubt, our self-confidence with the aim of separating us from the means the Holy Spirit uses to create and sustain faith: the Word and the Sacraments. In some sense faith is like a muscle, you need to feed it with God's Word, and give the Spirit a chance to exercise it. But when you separate yourself from His means of feeding it, faith can starve. When a person's body goes into starvation mode, and after all the fat reserves are depleted, it begins to break down the muscle tissue. So too can faith starve and waste away without the work the Holy Spirit does through the means of grace: God's word preached, read, and sung, and the Sacraments. When our world turns crazy how easy it is to trust in the things

that the unbelieving world trusts in? How easy is it to look for the answer within ourselves, or allow worry to erode our confidence in God's care? And once you've let your faith get choked out you no longer realize what it is that you've walked away from. It takes a miracle to bring you back. A miracle that only the Holy Spirit can do.

But that's what the Holy Spirit does through the preaching of Law and Gospel right? Yes, absolutely right. That's the work that He is doing right now. Because He knows the world is only going to get worse, the pressure on our lives of faith is only going to grow more severe. Now is the time to believe. Now is the time to work to keep your faith strong. We need to be hard at work with Him because who knows what tomorrow will bring? Our death? Or the Last Day? Whatever our faith relationship with Jesus is on that day will seal our eternal fate.

Jesus wants all of us to pay attention to this warning, because when that Last Day comes it will be too late for anyone with a faith that has been starved to death. **Luke 21:25-27** ²⁵ **"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** All of a sudden, the reality that we've come to know, and love, will be shaken to its very foundations. The powers of the cosmos will become unhinged along with a great and unimaginable upheaval of the seas and oceans. And how will those who lack faith react? Not by turning back to Christ, but with terrible fear, distress, and foreboding. And then they will see the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ return. Think back if you can remember from last week to **Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.** So Jesus is speaking to all of us when He says: **Luke 21:34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.** Watch yourselves. Pay attention. The stakes are high if you don't

Pay Attention to His Word that Will Never Pass Away

He certainly wants you to pay attention to these words of warning. But there are more words He wants you to pay attention to. **Luke 21:31-33** ³¹ **So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.** ³² **Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.** ³³ **Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.** Pay attention to His Words of promise because they are the Word of God Himself. The words of the smartest minds of the world, the scientists, the politicians; all their words will one day pass away. But His Word and promise will never pass away. And we who see these momentous events through the eyes of faith should see them with heartfelt joy and anticipation that pushes away all the fear. Because to us they are signs that the kingdom of God: the reign and rule of Jesus Christ is near. And there is a generation that will see it all, from the cosmic upheaval to the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds. They will see it all, some will rejoice, while others weep and wail. Which will you be?

Pay attention to how Jesus describes His coming **Luke 8:27** ²⁷ **And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** Notice how He refers to Himself as the "Son of Man". Remember from last Sunday, if I had your attention, that it was someone like a "Son of Man" who appeared before the Ancient of Days who is God the Father Himself. This "Son of Man" received an eternal kingdom that would never be overthrown. That was the Ascended Christ Jesus returning to the Father and sitting at His right hand, just as we confess in the Creeds. He received this kingdom because He had successfully and faithfully completed the Father's plan of salvation to save and redeem all creation. God the Father so loved the World that He sent this Son, His only Son, to be the perfect sacrifice to forgive the sins of all mankind, to forgive your sin, and my sin. He gave His life to do what none of us could never do, make us poor miserable sinners right with God. And His final words from the cross announced that He had successfully completed this mission when He said, "**It is finished**". And He proved that was so in His resurrection. And He has poured out this gift upon you by the faith you received in your baptism.

That's why Jesus says to us in **Luke 21:28** **Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**" For all of us who have been given this gift of faith and the salvation it delivers, Jesus' return is not the end, but only the beginning. The promised redemption is at hand. The work the Holy Spirit has begun in you at your baptism and has continued to work on every time you make use of the means of grace: His Word and His Sacrament, that work will be brought to completion on that final day. Your soul will be once and for all completely cleansed of sin. Your body will be glorified, made perfect to live forever. Creation itself will be redeemed from the curse of sin and will be made new and perfect once again just like it was on the 7th day of Creation. For all who have faith on that Last Day it certainly will be a day to lift up your heads and shout for joy. And Jesus wants you to pay attention to this message because He wants nothing more than you to be standing with Him on that Last Day

Conclusion: Pay Attention to Your Faith Life

Are you still with me? Are you still awake? Have you started to drift off and think about later today or tomorrow, or what that person across the Sanctuary is doing? **GOOD MORNING LAMB OF GOD!**

Jesus wants you pay attention to His Word. He wants you to live spiritually awake, with a faith-filled repentant heart. No one knows when this Last Day will come, but Jesus in His sure and certain word promises it will. It could be after our lives have concluded on this earth. It could be tomorrow. It could be today. Whatever day it does come, when it happens there will be not time to pick sides, to seek out the Gospel Message that you let slide because you were too busy or too wrapped up in the world, or because you developed bad habits about worship and Bible Study and allowed your faith to fade out, to be starved to death. The end and His return will come suddenly. **Luke 8:35-36** ³⁵ **For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.** ³⁶ **But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."** Jesus is telling you and I to pay attention to our life of faith. Stay awake, be active in the Spirit's working through the means of grace. Be in Bible Study. Pay attention to the Word preached, read, and sung. Stay awake and be in prayer with earnest petitions to Him over all that is going on in our world and in your life. Know that through the means of grace the Holy Spirit continues to do His part, providing you with the strength to escape the temptations of the world and the devil to fall away, so that you are ever ready for that day when you will stand before the Son of Man in eternity. Amen