

Devotion: Thursday, March 19, 2020

Luke 21:25-36

25 'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

29 Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'

34 'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

My 87 year old mom and 93 year old dad are worried.

Millennials are now worried, I was browsing through the empty shelves at Wegman's yesterday among moms with children in tow, children who under normal circumstances, should be in school. Many of these mom's faces had a worried look, and their eyes couldn't focus on the fact that you couldn't buy chicken or Purel or toilet paper.

But, when I went to the "Senior Hour" at Tops (6-9 am on Thursdays) it seems, folks my age, 65 and over are not so worried. I saw laughing and sharing of stories. Pat's on the back and a lot of "Stay Healthy"

Then I looked back, and I had realized that as a Baby Boomer, one my earliest memories of Catholic elementary school was going through a periodic safety drill known as "duck and cover." It was an ordinary thing.

During the early part of the Cold War, when Americans feared a missile attack from the Soviet Union, it was common for teachers to instruct students on what to do in the event of a nuclear war. If the air-raid sirens ever went off, the teachers advised the students, they were to immediately duck down under their desks, pull their knees up to their chins and cover their heads with their hands.

Today, of course, this advice seems nuts. If nuclear war ever were to burst forth upon the earth, a school desk would provide little protection. That's why America's schools stopped conducting duck-and-cover drills decades ago. They were pointless and only served to increase everyone's anxiety level.

But, as a baby boomer, these drills were common and expected. The Commies were going to destroy us so we had better be prepared. We were told this so much that we became numb to the fact that we were living each day just waiting to be vaporized.

It became commonplace to worry, and we grew numb to it.

Now it's a virus, and we are told to quarantine, distance ourselves and wash our hands as if we were going to conduct surgery.

And, some worry about not being able to “duck and cover.”

Jesus' advice to his disciples is just the opposite of duck and cover. Rather than advising them to hunker down in hard times and hope for the best, he instructs them to “Stand up and raise your heads.” Sounds wrong in this “distancing age”? Who would even think of raising their heads when sickness is all around?

A Christian, that's who. A Christian who believes God's promises and knows them to be true. This life has things to be feared, no doubt about that. If we didn't fear the worst-case scenarios — illness, poverty, pain, suffering and all the rest — we'd be considered foolish. Yet, Jesus is sharing good news here. He's telling us that all our fears are ultimately as nothing when laid up against the great plans God has for this world and all who follow him.

In his book *When God Whispers Your Name*, Max Lucado says that “The German word for worry means ‘to strangle.’ The Greek word for worry means ‘to divide the mind.’ Both are accurate. Worry is a noose on the neck and a distraction of the mind

Let's remember that next time we turn on the news, answer the phone, go out for groceries. Let's smile, and while keeping our distance, wish somebody, “Stay Healthy” and instead of “Duck and Cover” how about “Wash those Hands”!

Prayer of Intercession

Heavenly Father, when our wilderness journey ends and normalcy returns to our lives, remind us to look back and see where you carried us, deepened our faith and provided us with your loving care.

In the day of trial: **Be present, Lord.**

Holy Spirit, when suffering is the result of our own sin, inspire us to turn around, ask for help, accept your forgiveness and live a new life in your grace.

In the day of trial: **Be present, Lord.**

Holy Spirit, reconciling God, in Christ make us a new creation by forgiving our sins and sending us out with a mission to be your ambassadors of love, peace and new life.

In the day of trial: **Be present, Lord.**

Almighty God, hope beyond hope, love beyond understanding, forgiver and forgetter of our awful sins, wait for us in patience, but needle us with the memory of your loving self, our loving home.

In the day of trial: **Be present, Lord.**

We pray for those who need to be reminded that there is healing in your presence and homecoming, because there is a home.

In the day of trial: **Be present, Lord.**

From every wilderness day, good Lord, deliver us.

Amen.

Tomorrow is my Sabbath, and I will be observing it praying for all of you. Look for an order of worship and message Saturday evening so that we can still keep in Spiritual Contact with each other. If possible, perhaps we can all pray and observe that worship service at the same time we would have gathered, but in the safety of our own homes.

*9 for Adams Basin and 10:30 for Spencerport
I will be doing this, hope you can too.*

Stay Healthy, Check on your neighbors. God bless you all.

Pastor Jack