

Sermon for Sunday December 1st, 2024 at St. James Emily

[Read Luke 21: 25-36]

Jesus said, "...people will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

Jesus has a real knack for catching our attention!

For the Hebrew people to whom Jesus was speaking, life was full of unexplainable natural disasters. In addition, they had to live under an occupying army that took orders from Rome, a long way away, and it was all so arbitrary and unpredictable.

What message is there here for us in these arresting words of Jesus?

You need to be observant of what is going on around you. Do not choose to be ignorant and pull the covers over your head. Read good newspapers, watch balanced news reporting. Read biographies, novels and commentary. Go to the movies and engage in conversation with as many people as you can and have those conversations with a variety of people.

AND THEN HEAR THESE WORDS!

"And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

You and I cannot completely know what the future holds, but you can remind yourself that God – the one who comes with great glory – has a face and a heart for you and me and they are to be found in the Babe of Bethlehem!

We do not know in detail what the future holds, but this we DO know: we need not fear for the future for it belongs to God – it belongs to a powerful, active and compassionate God!

Does this mean we do nothing about the signs of the times? NO! Quite the contrary. As I've said before, Jesus does not encourage ignorance nor inaction!

Jesus knew that undue fear and anxiety can paralyze and lead to despair.

Knowing that God is with you and me, behind us and ahead of us, encouraging us to open our eyes, not close them, and encouraging us to be a part of God's transforming power in our own time.

We are not alone.

This is the best part of belonging to a church community. The sacred is as much our gathering together as it is the place we gather. Knowing that our God is present gives us hope.

No matter how devastating our losses, no matter how frightening the diagnosis you and I may receive, the faith that our Redeemer is coming in great glory tells us we are not alone in living

through the tough times and in the recovery.

Again let us turn to Jesus:

· “People will faint with fear”.

· “When these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near”.

There is a wonderful promise here. The worse things get the closer your God draws near.

So leave your fear (what the Germans call 'angst'), leave it behind!

Unpack the Christmas decorations and the lights. Hang the holly. Play the music for “our redemption is drawing nigh” in the babe of Bethlehem.

Prepare the Christmas cake and bake the cookies.

Reclaim your faith, your hope and your trust in these Advent Days.

Remember with conviction that this is God's world and universe.

Remember with conviction that the future ultimately belongs to God.

And, as a result, that future belongs to us, as well....to you, to your children, to your grandchildren and to your neighbours and friends!

And as Christmas draws nigh, having put paralyzing fear and angst behind you, reclaim a life of loving action.

Do not fall into the trap, Jesus says, the trap of fear and despair.

Oh yes, “be on guard”, He says, “against dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of this life”.

Acknowledge, with courage, that life can be hard, unfair, and unpredictable.

Acknowledge with courage that you cannot avoid any of it by eating and drinking your troubles away.

Acknowledge that worry never solved anything!

So be alert, educate yourself, observe what is going on around you and in our world. Watch, discern, and learn.

Then pray – that is, be in conversation with God about what you are hearing and seeing and, indeed, what causes you to be fearful.

Then listen...be still...be quiet...and know that God is very near. Deep from within you guidance will emerge.

Finally then, stand up, raise a loud shout of joyful confidence and get ready to celebrate the birth of our redeemer king in the Babe of Bethlehem.

O Come all ye faithful...Let's get ready to celebrate!

THANKS BE TO GOD!