

Luke 21:25-36

Lk 21:25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

Lk 21:26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

Lk 21:27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Lk 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Lk 21:29 He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees.

Lk 21:30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.

Lk 21:31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Lk 21:32 “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Lk 21:33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Lk 21:34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.

Lk 21:35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth.

Lk 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

One of our Advent hymns is *Let the Earth now Praise the Lord*. The first stanza reads, “Let the earth now praise the Lord. Who has truly kept His Word and at last to us did send Christ the sinners help and friend.” The Lord truly did keep His Word. As He promised throughout the Old Testament, He sent Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. Jesus did His saving work and then ascended into heaven. At His ascension angels told His disciples, “This same Jesus, Who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.” As surely as Jesus came the first time so surely He is coming again. His second coming will terrify the unbelievers. It will bring boundless joy to believers; therefore, be prepared for His coming.

The words of our text are a part of Jesus’ teaching concerning the end of the city of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Previously He had told His disciples of general signs that would precede the end of the world. He told of earthquakes in various places and of wars and rumors of wars and of famines and plagues. By the words before us he tells of those things that will immediately precede His second coming.

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. He speaks of the roaring of the sea and of the heavenly bodies being shaken.

At the Lord’s coming nature will collapse. The universe will be destroyed. All those things that people imagined would last forever will come apart. The heavens that we see and the earth that we live on will be burned up. The oceans will roar as the laws of nature are repealed. What will be unbelievers’ reaction to all of this? It will be distress and despair. What they feared deep down will finally happen. They will faint from terror. I can imagine people’s terror when they experience a terrible earthquake, when the very ground gives way beneath their feet. I can imagine the terror of someone who is trapped

by fire but these things are nothing compared to their terror as the unbelievers see their world coming apart. They will faint for terror.

The most terrifying sight the wicked will see will be that of Jesus, the Son of Man, coming in a cloud with power and great glory. They will see Him coming as their judge and they will remember their sins. All their guilt will suddenly be apparent to them. They will see Him whom they ignored and rejected and they will know what is about to happen to them. They will be judged and damned and there will be no escape.

However, the sight of Jesus coming in glory will have an entirely different effect on believers. The Savior's second coming will cause boundless joy.

God's law crushed their hearts during their lifetime. They were led to see their sin and their guilt. When they were told that Jesus came to save them they believed that message. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they trusted the Gospel that told them that He lived a holy life for them and that He paid for all their sins by the shedding of His blood. They were led to trust that Jesus loved them and that He had saved them. They were told they could look forward to His second coming with eager anticipation and they believed what they were told. The second coming of our Lord will be a cause for Christians to celebrate.

Jesus said, "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." During this life a Christian is weighed down. His life is a constant struggle. He is troubled by temptations. The devil is constantly trying to destroy his faith. He sees sin and the troubles that sin causes and these things grieve him. He must suffer hatred and persecution because he chooses to lead a godly life but when Jesus comes again he will be liberated. When Jesus came the first time He redeemed them but Christians are still stuck in this sick and sorry world. When the Lord comes again those who looked forward to the His appearing will be gathered with all the saints in paradise.

When these catastrophic events begin to take place then "straighten up" the Lord says. "Christian, lift up your head." Your Savior comes to take you home.

The Lord used the picture of the fig tree. When the fig tree begins to bud and leaf out you know that summer is near. When Christians see the signs of the end they know that the dreary winter of their existence in this world is over and shortly they will be set free to enjoy the eternal springtime of God's love.

The next words of Jesus are difficult to interpret. This generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Many take the word generation to be tribe or kind of people. It also has that meaning in the Greek language. This then is a referral to the Jewish people who will always endure until the Lord's second coming.

The next words are easy to understand, "Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away." It took thousands of years for the Old Testament's promises to be fulfilled. But true to His Word God sent Jesus. His Words are faithful and true. His promise of a second return of the Son of Man will also come true.

The Savior has a word of warning for believers as they await the second coming. "Be careful or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life and that day will close on you unexpectedly as a trap."

Christians must be on guard lest something steal away their faith. The Lord mentions things that are a danger. He speaks of carousing and the dizziness that comes from it. He speaks of drunkenness. This is a college town where people boast of getting

smashed and wild parties. Drunkenness is popular. However, drunkenness is not limited to young people. When people are intoxicated they lose control. They forget about Christ and his righteousness. This is the reason I urge Christians not to get drunk or to use drugs, another form of intoxication. The Lord also mentions another form of intoxication; the cares of life. Folks can get so involved with work, making money, family, personal problems, entertainment or just living in general that they lose their Christian perspective. They begin to live for this life and not for the one that is to come. They fail to see what is really important, neglect their faith and in the end lose their faith. Then the trap will snap and they will be caught.

The end is surely drawing near therefore the Lord says, "Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Jesus is coming. How can anyone stand before Him? How can we be ready? "Watch," Jesus says. Watch for His coming. Let it always be in your mind that He might come in the next instant and live accordingly. When your sinful nature says relax your vigilance and come and sin a little. Say, "No, I must always be prepared. I must not endanger my standing before my Lord." Keep the lamp of faith burning brightly through the faithful use of Word and Sacrament. Daily confess your sins and take comfort in Christ's forgiveness.

Jesus says, "Pray." Jesus will preserve you in faith. He promises to do so, so trust Him and pray, "Lord, protect me against all the attacks on my faith. Strengthen me by Your Word and Sacrament. Preserve my trust in Your righteousness and Your sacrifice for my sins so that I can confidently stand on that great day of your coming. Remember it is Jesus, Your loving Savior who is coming. He has made you acceptable in His sight. He comes in love to redeem you, to liberate you. With that as our future we can pray the words from the Book of Revelation, Amen. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.