

REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 78: "THE WIDOW'S SACRIFICIAL GIFT"

LUKE 21:5-38

Ps. Jeff Susila

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 78 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

Before we get started, let me pray for us again...

Sermon Introduction

Do you like watching movies and TV shows? For some of us here, including me, we can get really into our favorite movies and TV shows because, over time, we've become so invested in our favorite characters, right?

We watch, sitting at the edge of our seats, feeling nervous at times about what's going to happen next...

- Will our favorite character finally get together with the person whom he/she loves?
- Will they survive the drama and the battles that are about to unfold?
- Will they make it to the end alive?

We're watching with suspense! As they fear for their lives, we kinda feel that fear for them too!

<pause>

But... what happens when you already know what's to come in the future? Perhaps you read about the ending online or heard it from a friend (whether accidentally or not).

Then you don't feel that same level of fear and suspense anymore, right? You know they're going to get together with their loved ones, and they're going to win the final battle, and your favorite character is going to survive in the end.

So as you watch, you're now more at ease.

<pause>

Well, similarly, we also know what'll happen in our future... because Jesus already tells us (and in the passage we'll be reading today, Jesus tells his disciples of what's to come in their future).

And it's not going to be easy; there will be trials. But as followers of Christ, we know our ending... That no matter what happens in this life... In the end... we'll have redemption. Because those who put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will not perish, but have eternal life.

So as we face current difficulties in our lives or whatever may come our way in the future... we don't have to fear... because in the end... we know that everything will be okay (because those who believe in Jesus will be redeemed).

The One Thing

***Though the end is coming, do not fear;
for Jesus is coming, redemption is near***

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you please turn to Luke 21:5-38.

Last week, we learned that, as Jesus was at the temple in Jerusalem... he observed the rich and a poor widow giving their gifts to God. And the poor widow's 2 small copper coins were valued MORE than the rich's large sums of money because the widow sacrificially gave all that she had to the temple, and that showcased true love and devotion to God.

Today's passage starts as Jesus and his disciples were finally leaving the temple grounds, and the disciples admiring the temple...

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 21:1-4.

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?" ⁸ And he said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. ⁹ And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹² But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³ This will be your opportunity to bear witness. ¹⁴ Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, ¹⁵ for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives.

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

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. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹ And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. 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.

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.”

³⁷ And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸ And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

This is God’s Word.

Overview

- I. Jesus foretells the near future: the destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 5-24)
 - a. How should we live as disciples during this time?
 - b. What will happen during this time?
- II. Jesus foretells the far future: his second coming (vv. 25-38)
 - a. What will happen during this time?
 - b. How should we live as disciples during this time?

One thing to keep in mind here is that the “near future” is referring to the disciples’ near future (not ours)... because the destruction of Jerusalem would actually occur in the year 70 AD (in about 40 years’ time for them) - But for us, it already happened thousands of years ago in the past.

So Jesus foretells 2 separate events here... And 1 event in their near future (the destruction of Jerusalem) would foreshadow another event in the farther future (his second coming) - which hasn’t happened yet.

And interestingly, each time Jesus foretells 1 event, he also goes over how his disciples should be living during that period of time.

So we’ll be doing the same. In each point, we’ll answer 2 questions:

- What will happen during this time?
- And how should we live as disciples during this time?

I. Jesus foretells the near future: the destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 5-24)

It’s been quite an eventful day for Jesus. After such a long day of teaching, and being confronted by the religious leaders, and observing the rich and the poor widow give their gifts... we know from the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark... that Jesus was now finally leaving the temple grounds...



Show <Second_Temple.jpg>

And as Jesus and his disciples were leaving, his disciples then pointed out the beauty of the temple's construction. How it was adorned with noble stones (large, beautiful, white stones that make up the stonework of the temple). And how it was lavished with many offerings and ornaments that the people gifted, like: beautiful tapestries, and golden & bronze doors around the temple). So, at that time, the temple in Jerusalem was truly a grand and magnificent sight to behold.

And it wasn't only beautiful to look at, but for the Jewish people, the temple in Jerusalem represents the very center of Jewish life! (For us, there may not be a perfect 1-to-1 comparison, but it may be like DKI Jakarta). Because for the Jews, the temple served as the hub for their political, judicial, economic, and religious life. A lot of happenings revolved around the temple.

But look at verse 6 - Jesus takes this opportunity to prepare his disciples for what's to come... Jesus said, "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."

- So the temple that disciples were currently admiring... would not last forever! Jesus foretells a time in the future when the temple will be destroyed! And not even one stone will be left!
- And imagine that this must've been so shocking for the disciples to hear! Especially as they're seeing it standing tall before them.

So then, naturally, after hearing such a revelation... The disciples wanted to know more about it! Look at verse 7 - they asked 2 questions:

- When will these things be? (so when will the temple be destroyed?)
- And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place? (so what signs should we be watching for that would tell us that the temple's destruction is imminent?)

<pause>

So notice how their questions are mainly about the timing of this future event - When will it be? How will we know?

- And I think that's reasonable... if I were in their shoes, I'd also be asking these same questions.

But then look at verse 8; let's see how Jesus answers them...

Jesus said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them."

Now, isn't that interesting? That's not how you'd expect Jesus to start off his answer! You'd almost expect him to say a specific amount of time - "in X number of years." Because the question was about the timing of the destruction of the temple. So why is the first thing that he says to them about false messiahs?

What does this tell us?

- Well, if we also take a peek at the rest of Jesus' answer, what Jesus seems to be more concerned about... is his disciples' followership of him... their followership of him during the events that's about to come... that's more important to Jesus than them actually knowing the signs and the exact dates of when things are going to happen!
- And remember the timing here... Jesus is now in the final days of his ministry on Earth.
 - So what's happening here can be thought of as Jesus' final preparation for his disciples.
 - Because in just mere days, Jesus will be crucified and buried. And then he'll resurrect, and then will ascend to Heaven.
- So that means... that there will be a period of time, where Jesus will not be with his disciples in-person.
 - And this period of time between his first and second coming is what we call the last days (and yes... this does mean that we're in the last days right now, as we wait for his second coming. And we have been for 2,000 years).
 - So what Jesus will be saying here is going to be extremely important for his disciples - not only back then, but us today as well.

So then in order to prepare his disciples to not fear what's ahead in the future - and in order to help them to remain strong and steadfast in the faith that they have - Jesus is not only going to be focusing merely on describing the timing and the signs of the end times, but he's also going to be guiding his disciples on how they can remain faithful in their followership of Christ during this period of time (And again, that's more important to Jesus than us knowing the exact timing of the end times).

How should we live as disciples during this time?

- Heads-up: there will be three things we'll focus on...

First, we're to be wary of false messiahs (and false teachers), and we're not to be led astray!

These false messiahs will try to lead them astray, trying to convince them that they're the "messiah" themselves (when they're actually not), and they're going to say that the time is at hand! (So they may act as if they know the exact dates of when these future things will happen... when they actually don't!)

- In our history, this has happened multiple times... there's been various people predicting that the end of the world would be in the year 1844, or the year 2000, or 2012...
 - Some of you might've remembered reading or watching that in the news back then (there's even been documentaries and movies made about the end of the world on these specific dates).
- But actually, Jesus says that "no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen" (Matt. 24:36).
- So don't be fooled! Don't follow them! That's Jesus' warning to us, as his disciples. Don't focus too much on the exact timing that we become prone to be led astray by such news...

<pause>

Now, look at verses 9 - Even though we don't need to focus too much on the exact timing of when these things will happen, Jesus warns his disciples that there will indeed be troubling times ahead. But even when those things do happen, we don't need to be afraid.

So then how should we live as disciples during this time?

The second thing is that we don't need to be afraid.

So Jesus warns his disciples that - in the future - there will still be wars (nation against nation; kingdom against kingdom), and there will be great earthquakes, and famines, and pestilences (or plagues).

- These are things that would instill fear in people's hearts (these things would cause people to fear for their lives and their safety).
- And Jesus knows this. That these things are indeed unpleasant and scary...
- He's aware that it may be discouraging to witness these horrible things.

And even these past few years, throughout our world... We've seen many horrible things that could cause fear within our hearts. There's been a pandemic, natural disasters, financial instability, wars, and international conflicts.

- And Jesus knows that this is all may be troubling to us.

And knowing the fear that may be in our hearts... Jesus says to his disciples, "do not be terrified." Do not be terrified... "for these things must first take place..." - these things must first take place before the end.

- So we can be comforted in knowing that God knows what must first take place.
- And even when these disturbing things are happening... and to us, it may seem like the world is going out of control... we don't need to fear because we trust that God is still fully in control.

And as his disciples, we know that this world - this life - as we know it... is not all there is to it. One day, it will come to pass.

- And it also means that these things - whatever it is that may be troubling us at this time... they will also come to pass.

But it will just not happen immediately...

<pause>

Because Jesus also warns that for his disciples that there will be more troubling times ahead. Jesus is not sugar-coating anything. There will still be suffering ahead... and there will be a specific kind of suffering that's going to be unique only to his disciples; only to Christians...

Look at verse 12 - Jesus warns that during this time, there will be persecution. That they'll be hated because of the name of Jesus Christ.

But how should we live as disciples during this time?

The third thing is that we're to endure in our faith.

Jesus did not promise that life for his disciples would be free from any hardship.

He foretells the future in which his disciples would be arrested and handed over to the synagogue leaders, brought before kings and governors, and be put in prisons. And Jesus mentioned that some of the people who'd hand them over would be their own family members (parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives), and their own friends. And that they will be hated by everyone, and some of them... will even be put to death.

Now, for some of us here, this may be shocking to hear. This may not be what we expected when we became Christians. Or if we're still exploring Christianity, this may not be what we expected to hear. But Jesus did not promise his disciples riches, comfort, and pleasures in this world, but instead, he said that there will be persecution and trials.

- And throughout history we know this to be true... we've read accounts of the apostles and the first disciples being persecuted and being killed in horrible ways (even being crucified upside down and stoned to death).
- And we've heard stories of many missionaries who were killed by the very people whom they're trying to share the Gospel with.
- And even now, perhaps some of us have been mocked by friends and co-workers, or even by our own family members because we're Christians.

And it can be emotionally exhausting. And this all can be very discouraging.

And even more so... when we're feeling down, this is when the lies in our minds may start to sound louder. Satan, the enemy, will be actively working against God's people.

- During times of persecution and trials, Satan will be trying to lead you astray, whispering lies to you, "See where you're at because you decided to follow Jesus? Maybe you'd be better off if you just turn back to your old life. It seemed easier."
- Remember what Jesus said... Do not be led astray! And do not be afraid!

Jesus doesn't promise us a trouble-free life, but what he does promise us is that he'll be with us during these trials, and so you won't be alone even as you go through persecution. Before he ascended to Heaven, Jesus said, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

<pause>

Look at verse 13 - Jesus said that this time of persecution is not time to be afraid, but is actually a time of opportunity!

- For his disciples, this will actually be an opportunity to bear witness. This is their opportunity to show their persecutors how much Jesus means to them.
 - It's an opportunity to share the Gospel with them.
 - And Jesus says that when the time comes, he will be there with them! He will provide them with the words and wisdom that they need to share with their persecutors. They're not to merely rely on their own strength and understanding, focusing too much on how exactly they need to defend themselves - but, rather, they're to rely on God - on His Word and wisdom that will be put in their mouths.
 - And we know from the book of Acts, that God was truly with his disciples, providing them support - as He provided Stephen, Peter, John, and other disciples with the right words to say that their persecutors could not contradict them.

The persecution of the first church in Jerusalem did not lead to its destruction, but it led to their expansion as many disciples left Jerusalem to share the Good News throughout Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth!

Persecution became the fire that fueled evangelism!

And I hope it's the same with us, that whatever persecution we may face from others, that we may take the opportunity to show them what our Lord Jesus is like by showing them supernatural love and patience - by praying for the opportunity to share the Gospel with them, while we rely on God's Word as we speak, and trusting that He'll be the one working in their hearts.

<pause>

Now look at verses 18-19. It says this:

But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

What does Jesus mean here? Because he just said that some disciples will be hated and killed. But then “not a hair of your head will perish?”

Well, what Jesus is talking about here is our eternal life that’s to come.

- Though our physical bodies may be harmed, no one can harm the eternal life that we’ll have in our resurrected, glorified bodies.

Here, Jesus reminds us of the ending to all of our stories - and it’s not really an ending, but it’s more like a new beginning - that is eternal life. So when we’re facing times of trials and persecution, may we be reminded that we do not need to fear for we know that this will all end in our redemption. And that everything will be okay.

In fact, it’s through the trials themselves that we may grow in our endurance. For we know that it’s our sufferings that produce endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame.

- For our hope in Christ leads to life...

<pause>

After Jesus tells his disciples how they should live as his disciples during that time - that they should be wary to not be led astray, that they do not need to be afraid, and that they’re to endure persecution... remembering that at the end, they will gain eternal life...

After Jesus prepares his disciples, he finally shares with them what will happen during this time that’ll lead to destruction of the city and the temple (which for the disciples, is in the near future)...

What will happen during this time?

Verses 20-21 say this:

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it”

Jesus prophesies that the city of Jerusalem will be besieged; that armies will surround the city.

When that time comes, his disciples are not to go into the city (as some people may be tempted to do - in order to go and stay inside the city walls for protection). But instead, they’re to flee! Depart the city because Jerusalem will be destroyed!

And this will be a time of great distress for the people. That even blessings would seem like a curse; that even women who were blessed with children (either pregnant or nursing young infants) would wish that they weren’t in that position.

We know from history, that - in around 70 AD - the Romans actually besieged the city of Jerusalem... They surrounded the city blocking off food and resources from entering it - causing many of its citizens to starve. And those who didn’t die of hunger were killed by the soldiers. And in the end, hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives were lost during the siege. And the temple was destroyed and the city was burned to the ground. It was completely trampled (and shamed) by the Gentiles.

Look at verse 22 - Jesus explains that this will all happen in order to fulfill what is written in Scripture.

- Scripture - the Word of God Himself - has warned Israel many times regarding God's judgment that's awaiting them - that if they turn away from God, then they will face condemnation and they will fall in the hands of their enemies (Jer 6:1-8; 26:1-6; Mic 3:12; cf. also 1 Kgs 9:6-9).
- And since their rejection is clear, and would be even clearer in mere days when a crowd would be screaming for Jesus to be crucified.... What's written about them in Scripture will be fulfilled... they will be punished for their sins.
 - All in accordance to God's Word...

<pause>

But from other historical accounts, we also know that even though thousands of lives were lost, many were also saved! There are records of Christians heeding Jesus' warning and escaping the city while they still can. They truly believed that this prophecy would be fulfilled, and because of their faith, the lives of many Christians were miraculously spared.

And so God continues to prove to His people that He truly cares for them and is watching over them even in times of trials, persecution, and destruction.

<pause>

But God also continues to prove that those who continue to go against Him will be condemned...

This judgment upon Jerusalem (which happened in 70 AD) foreshadows the time of final judgment that's still to come at the end of the age. When all will be judged for their sins.

- God's Word says that we're all sinners - and we all need to repent of our sins. That for those who do not repent of their sins and turn to God... will bear the full punishment that their sins justly deserve - and that just punishment is eternal torment in Hell. That's the bad news that we all have to face.

But here's the Good News of Jesus Christ - in his first coming, Jesus came to die on the cross for the sins of man. He came to redeem us; to save us! He took on the punishment that we deserved. So that we - the people who believe in him as Lord and Savior - will not perish (not a hair on our heads will perish)... instead, we will have eternal life. That's the Good News!

And Jesus will return again a second time to fully consummate the Kingdom of God, when he'll bring the fullness of God's kingdom in the New Heaven and New Earth.

And that's what we'll see Jesus will foretell next. So after foretelling the near future (about the destruction of Jerusalem), Jesus now foretells another event farther in the future (that is... his second coming)...

II. Jesus foretells the far future: his second coming (vv. 25-38)

What will happen during this time?

Look at verse 25 - There will be cosmic signs in the sun, moon, and stars; there will be a cosmic upheaval (serious physical changes to the world, as mentioned in the book of Revelation). And people will be perplexed because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. And some people will even be fainting in fear - in shock of what they're seeing, and anxious about what's to come.

Verse 27 says this:

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

So at that time, people will be able to see with their own eyes... Jesus, the Son of Man, returning exactly as he left... visibly coming in a cloud with power and great glory!

- Now, unlike the destruction of Jerusalem, which was already fulfilled. The event Jesus describes here has not happened yet, and is still to come. And as his disciples, this is the day that we're still waiting for...

Now, notice how Jesus doesn't get into too much detail here about the cosmic signs that are to come (though he does briefly mention them). And I think this is intentional - even though those signs are important, we're not to get too caught up with the details of these signs.

- Because the most important thing about the end of the world is actually not the signs (or the exact timing), but it's the return of Jesus Christ!

That he will come back to fully establish the Kingdom of God! That's the most important thing!

<pause>

Now is this what you believe? That Jesus will one day return? Because Jesus' second coming has great implications for all of us (both Christians and non-Christians).

Because when that day comes, Jesus will judge all the people of the world. And he will separate people one from another just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Look at verse 26... For one group - those who are unbelievers, this will be a time of fear and anxiety.

- They're not sure what's happening here, and not sure of what's about to happen.
- They may be fearful thinking of everything that they may lose during this time: losing their lives, their possessions, losing control of their present and future.
- They're anxious because they're not sure if everything is going to be okay or not...
 - And unfortunately, it won't be. For those who have not repented and turned to Christ, this will be a time of judgment and condemnation - because for their sins, they will be cast to Hell.

But for those who believe in Jesus Christ, do not be afraid! Look at verse 28 - Jesus says that this will be a time - not of fear - but of redemption!

- Jesus tells his disciples that when this time comes, we can straighten up and raise our heads with confidence, knowing that the blood of Christ has made us right before the sight of God.
- And so our redemption is near!
- And we're not to be confused of what's happening around us - because we know exactly what's happening... that the old heaven (the old skies) and the old earth is passing away! And that there will be a new creation: New Heaven & New Earth - where God will dwell with His people, and we will dwell with God forever! This is not a time of uncertainty but certainty.

So at this time... at the same time that the unbelievers will lose everything (their lives and all of their worldly possessions)... at the same time, the believers will receive everything! (Eternal life and eternal rewards!)

This is the day that all Christians (from the past, present, and future) have been waiting for. This is why Christians are empowered to endure persecution and trials... because the end is worth it.

<pause>

Now, let's look at verse 29 - Jesus then told his disciples a parable: Just like how you're able to see the leaves come out on the fig tree (and all the trees), and know that summer is near... you can see all these things happening (these signs) and also know that the Kingdom of God is near!

Look at verse 32 - "This generation will not pass away until all has taken place."

- Some commentators believe that "this generation" refers to the generation of the Jewish people who'd see all the signs leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

- Other commentators believe that it may refer to the generation who'd see the cosmic signs that Jesus just mentioned, which would refer to the ones who would see the second coming with their own eyes.

Either way, what Jesus is highlighting is that whatever will come to pass... will come to pass. These things will happen; those who see these signs will see these events. It's not a question of "if" but "when."

Let's look at verse 33 - Jesus then reminds us that even though heaven and earth will pass away (even though the old heaven and earth will pass away when a new creation will be made)... even if those great things pass away, Jesus says that "my words will not pass away." What Jesus says is true and will always remain true.

If Jesus' words will not pass away, and is alive, and is always true, and will be fulfilled... then this has huge implications for us.

- Because Jesus said that he will die and then resurrect... and he did.
- And he said that the temple and the city would be destroyed... and they were.
- And now he said that he will come back... and so that means that he really will!

We need to heed his words carefully. And notice how Jesus said "my words" will not pass away - this is no ordinary person's words. Jesus is fully man AND fully God. His words are the words of God.

And we have the great privilege of having access to God's Word through the Bible.

So I'd encourage us to get to know God's Word - spend time with the Bible. If we truly believe that it contains the Word of God Himself - that'll never pass away, that's true, and will remain alive forever... then what can be more important for us than to get to know our God through the Word that He's made available for us? Our God wants to be known!

And He invites you to get to know Him personally.

- So if you have not yet put your faith in Jesus Christ, I'd encourage you to talk to anyone around you or talk to me after the service, and we'd love to answer any questions that you may have.
- If you don't have a copy of the Bible, you can also come talk to me and I can help you get access to one.

But... you should know this... the invitation to repent and turn to Him is open to anyone (including you), but... we know that there's a limited amount of time that this invitation will be open. When it's time for final judgment - at the end of the age - that time is up.

- So this should not be a decision that should be taken lightly.

And for those of us who have already put our faith in Christ, the question for us would be this:

As disciples waiting for the second coming of Christ...

<pause>

How should we live as disciples during this time?

Well, we don't have to guess. Because Jesus tells us exactly the implication that this has for his disciples...

Verse 34 says this:

"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! Now that you know what's coming in the future - that there will be false messiahs, persecution, and judgment - watch yourselves! Don't let your hearts be weighed down (or dulled) by:

- Dissipation, drunkenness, and cares of this world...

Now, it's interesting how the cares of this world (which can also be translated as the "anxieties" of this world)... it's interesting how it's grouped together with drunkenness and dissipation (which means: feelings of hangover).

- But I think it's because they're actually not too different from one another - because these are the things that distract us from the things that are eternal.
 - These things numb our minds so we're not alert and sober-minded...
 - They weigh us down from seeing things in light of eternity...
- Because our cares and anxieties of this world (including our fears)... they can prevent us from seeing things clearly. They narrow our view so we become too focused only with our own lives - as if that's all we have and there's nothing more to the lives we have now... And just like drunkenness, it causes our view of what's eternal to get really fuzzy and blurry...
 - And we can become too focused on: our own career (what's going to happen at work tomorrow), or what we're going to eat next, or what we will wear, or how we will pay our bills, or when our next vacation will be, and so forth...
 - To be clear, these can be legitimate concerns. But... sin can easily corrupt anything that's in our minds and hearts, allowing it to consume our thoughts...

So what have you been thinking about lately? And how much time per day do you spend thinking about it compared to how much time you think of the things that are eternal? What's consuming your mind these days?

- Perhaps this past week... you've even caught yourself scrolling through social media for hours without realizing it.

Jesus warns us that if the cares of this world becomes ALL that we think about, then that final day of judgment will come upon us surprisingly like a trap!

- You won't see it coming! Because you're too busy with other matters that you deem to be more important at the time...

Look at verse 36 - Instead of being weighed down by those things, Jesus said, "stay awake!"

- Stay awake at all times! And this doesn't mean being physically awake, but spiritually awake!
 - Be alert! Because you don't know the exact time that Jesus Christ will return! When he does, you want to make sure that you're alert.
- Look again to verse 36 - Jesus immediately tells us what we can do in order to stay awake. It's by praying!
 - How can you stay awake? Jesus gives us the means... it's through prayer...

Praying wakes you up spiritually! When you pray (or speak with God)...

- It reminds you that there's more to life than what this world has to offer.
- It reminds you that you're not in control, and God is in control!
- It reminds you that you're small, and God is big.
- And it reminds you that if God is on your side, then there's nothing to fear.
- And it reminds you that because your salvation is secure in Christ, then your redemption is near.

Prayer is an important tool that God has provided us so that we may keep ourselves awake and stay alert during the last days... It refocuses our hearts and minds to the things that are of God's Kingdom.

- So have you been praying? (Parents, what have you been teaching your kids about prayer?)
- And what have you been praying for?
 - If you catch that you've been praying mostly for yourself. I encourage you to continue to do so, but I invite you to also pray for others, and pray for your church, and pray for the world, and for God's will to be done...

And not only can we pray personally, but we can also pray corporately as a church! We can keep each other accountable, keeping each other awake and alert through prayer.

- We can pray for one another. We can share our prayer requests to one another.
- And we can pray for those whom we haven't seen in a while (or those straying away), praying that God may stir the fire in their hearts.
 - Each week, we're praying for 10 church members. If you're a covenant-signing member, I encourage you to check our WA group and to pray for your fellow brothers and sisters - pray that they may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, so that they may stand before the Son of Man.

<pause>

Going back to the disciples' questions, they asked regarding the timing and the signs leading to the destruction of the temple.

What Jesus gave them was a fuller answer than they probably expected.

- He didn't provide them with the exact timing, but he did share some of the signs that they should be looking for.
- But more than that, Jesus taught them how they should be living as his disciples during the last days (when he won't be with them in-person).
 - That they're to be wary and not be led astray, that they don't need to be afraid, that they're to endure persecution with hope, and they're to stay awake by praying...
 - All this to say... they're to keep their eyes on Christ - the source of their hope and salvation.

<pause>

Finally, let's look at verse 37 - This acts as a bookend to what's first mentioned at the end of chapter 19 (that after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was teaching daily in the temple). And that after teaching at the temple, we now know that Jesus would rest at night at the Mount of Olives. And then early in the morning, as he teaches at the temple, many people would gather to hear his teachings.

And some will hear and will receive him. Others will hear but will not receive him. Have you received Jesus?

- If you haven't, I invite you today to repent of your sins and to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
 - There is no other way to escape final judgment. And you cannot earn your way by doing good works - that's not a possible way! Only Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

And for those of us who have received him, we know that our salvation is secure in Christ and we've been redeemed. And that means that we already know how our story will end... we know our ending... that in the end, there will be a new beginning... and forever, we will be in Heaven with our God who loves us and we'll be with the brothers and sisters whom we love. So that means that even though the end is coming, we do not need to fear...

The One Thing

***Though the end is coming, do not fear;
for Jesus is coming, redemption is near***

