

ONE DAY VISION
[written in oral form]

Luke 21:5-19
Proper 28, Year C {with theme "What so good about Good News"}

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What a story!

There had been trouble in the past, but it became more frequent and radical. There were even calls for more fighting,... not less.

The foundation / the old order was crumbling; the fortress walls were falling down. Many, in isolated areas, felt the persecution.

Then suddenly, an acerbic attack on the weak for not submitting.

And Finally, it was over: Don Cherry was fired.

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Oops, that not the story from our text, but Don Cherry could easily claim Luke's passage, if he took it out of context.

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Luke included this message in his book for a reason.

It is about the destruction of the temple and persecution.

The text is Not Apocalyptic, nor is it about the parousia--Christ's return.

According to Irenaeus,(CE 180), Luke wrote after the death of Paul.

By the year 80 CE, most of the great Christian leaders were killed--Stephen, James, Peter and Paul.

The Romans destroyed all of Jerusalem, including the temple, in 70 CE. This was a frightful time for Christians, and it was worse for the Jews.

The Jewish Roman war started in 68 from a rebellion against Rome.

Rome became very irritated by the resistance. So, they surrounded, and then totally destroyed Jerusalem.

The historian, Josephus, estimated a million people were slaughtered, mostly Jews. An exaggeration because many fled the area, but countless were killed.

The Romans left the city a wasteland. They cut down all the trees, burned everything and demolished the temple. 97,000 were taken as slaves, and the hiding remnant faced starvation.

Many Christians tried to convince the Romans that they were no longer Jewish, but the Romans had no interest in compassion, and so they were persecuted, too.

Aspiring sages cried out, "The end is near, Jesus is returning", giving people a twisted sense of false hope.

I imagine some were using their prophecy for personal gain.

Such as, "Give me your money, and I'll make sure you will get to heaven."

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This was the turmoil / this was the frightful context that Luke was addressing. His audience was scared, confused and persecuted.

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The passage begins with a warning to not be deceived / to not be led astray by pretenders and false Messiahs.

Then it goes on and describes the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. Adversaries will come from both sides. Believers in Jesus were tried in synagogues and by the Roman authorities.

Even though all will hate them, the reader is told that this is a golden opportunity to speak out and witness for Jesus.

In his book of Acts, Luke gave numerous such examples of believers speaking out while persecuted.

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Standing firm in the face of persecution is indeed a strong testimony of one's faith.

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Interestingly, even family members may betray the believers, such was the division / the polarity.

Noting that some will die, the text ends, "Not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

This is symbolic of God's devoted love for us, that even the hairs on our head are known by God.

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By the way, the quantity of hair on one's head is no reflection to the quantity or quality of God's love for that person.

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The final sentence states that the our devotion / our commitment to holding onto God will serve us well. We will not be disappointed by believing and holding onto God.

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Some key points in this text: don't be deceived, don't be afraid, speak your faith and hold on.

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It is helpful, even important, to remember the audience and the situation when this was written nearly 2,000 years ago.

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I have talked with some committed church people who are convinced we are in the end times. Some of them thought that, 50 years ago.

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I have heard foolish predictions including Climate Change is really the beginning of the Apocalypse. Suggesting, humans are excused because it is all God's doing.

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I suppose if one twists this passage enough, apocalyptic blood would ooze out from it. ????

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The details of this text do not apply to us today. However, there is enduring truth in this 2,000 year old message.

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I wonder what Luke would say if he was writing this for our situation?
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There are bizarre leaders spewing lies and projecting all sorts of threats. Social media cannot be trusted either. There are lots of fabricated, false stories circulating.

So, we better be on guard and not be deceived.  
Moreover, we must not be consumed by the lies and distortions.  
The obsession to mock the ludicrous tweets can capture our spirit and lead us astray.  
We must be wise and discerning.

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To be sure, we--this audience are not enduring physical persecution.
So, that is truly a relief.

Although, I have read that a segment of the far right wing of the church thinks they are being persecuted / that the church is being persecuted.

Sadly, they have blended their sense of "Good Ol' Boy, white, male privilege with their religion.

Better: they have made it their religion.

And yes, that bigoted, racist elitism is being dismantled, and... not fast enough.

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For us,.....well,.....we have it pretty good. We are comfortable, respected and affluent.

The strange thing is that we are afraid. We are afraid of the future.

We are afraid of current events.

We are even afraid to share our faith.

Most of us would never mention, in the general public, our commit to God or comment that we are followers of Christ.

We would rarely give thanks or praise to God when a stranger is present.

Why are we so afraid to do that?

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I am not sure what Luke would write for us today, but I think it would be similar to the following:

Do not be lead astray,.....and do not be terrified.

Yes, parts of the world are falling apart.

Yes, gun violence is on the rise, as are populous tyrants.

The temple of democratic capitalism is crumbling, and oligarchs are rushing in to capture the treasures for themselves.

Yes, there are endless wars. Gaza is horrendous.

And, there be will be millions and millions of refugees all over the world,.....from war and the effects of climate change.

In addition, there is family turmoil from political polarity.

Many family gathering either erupt in anger or self limit conversation to the weather, pets and why the Leafs are losing.

*Many of us have experienced this.*

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There is anger, there is fear, and there is family turmoil, and so maybe... today's text is appropriate for us.

Luke's message is God, through Jesus, telling us:

Do Not be afraid. Be bold and proclaim your faith.

Now is a golden opportunity.

Have faith in God. Holding onto God will get us through / will serve us well.

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Rising from this passage is the sense of "One day at a time"

Have a One Day Vision.

One day is today. Live today. Live Now without fear.

And, firmly believe One day, things will be better, thanks be to God.

One day vision is Not obsessing and worrying about the future.

It is trusting God for today.....and tomorrow.

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Trusting God is Not avoiding responsibility, Not at all.

Trusting in God empowers us and gives us confidence to take action.

With the awareness that God is with us and loves us, we can share our faith, and we can work for social justice.

We can.....because with God, our lives / our actions will make a difference / will make the world a better place.

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With so much fear and anger in the world, just imagine the impression / the impact that a group of optimistic, hopeful people will have.

The contrast between fearful, anger and hopeful, loving compassion is radical... and powerful. It is a golden opportunity.

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One other aspect to this text is the honesty that nasty things will happen, even to believers.

Bad things happen. It is just a part of life. We need to accept that.

However, we need not let those negative things defeat us.

We are a victim, but we do NOT need to live as one.

God, through Jesus, invites us to live with a calming hope / to live trusting God, one day at a time.

This was a common message from Jesus -- Do not worry about tomorrow. Do not be afraid.

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So,... what about the sign of the times? ????

I think that is a prompt for self reflection, because it depends on our view.