

Intro: After a long and good week, I found myself flipping through the channels during the intermissions of the Bruins game Friday night, and in the process I rediscovered the show hosted by John Quinones called: "What would you do?" Maybe you've seen the show. They plant actors in different business to act in socially unacceptable and ridiculous ways in order to test how people will respond. The design of the show is to challenge viewers to consider what they would do under the same circumstances. This week the first scene was setup at a nail salon. They planted an arrogant and bigoted customer who rattled off a series of derogatory and racist comments to the young lady giving her a pedicure. Thankfully, each time the customers to her right and left were so appalled and offended for this worker that they came to her rescue. At times, it was "you're making me feel uncomfortable." to the more extreme physiological effects of anger to the point of sweat and frustration to the point of tears. [During one confrontation a lady said: "I'm crying for your mindset, that there are people like you out there."] The next scene placed an obnoxious guy in the coffee shop ordering: "triple shot latte, with sugar free pomegranate syrup, half half & half (whatever that is!), a puff of cinnamon and three red M&Ms, all delivered at a precise 137 degrees, and oh, make sure you don't "scorch the milk." You had people tipping the poor barista, standing up to him, telling him to keep his _P*&!^P_ mouth shut, and one guy even offering to stepping up and offering to spit in his drink. What would you do?

If you've journeyed with us through the Gospel of Luke, you know this skilled physician, turned historian and Christian has written his gospel to elicit a response to the Jesus question in a "What Would You Do?" kind of way. Many times the question may be more accurately phrased: "What Will You Do?" and that is the intention of our passage this am. In Luke 21:5-38, we are going to hear Jesus foretelling the coming judgment on Jerusalem and calling his followers to careful watchfulness in preparation for his coming and the end of the world.

"Watchfulness" Luke 21:5-38

In light of the return of Christ, we must

The Point: Be ready for the coming judgment through watchful perseverance in God's strength.

- Jesus was a Teacher. In fact, Jesus is the consummate Teacher. It is interesting that chapter 2 told us of Jesus as a twelve-year old boy "in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."
- Now just hours before his death we find him in the temple again, teaching. Verses 37-38 tell us that Jesus taught in the temple and early everyday all the people came to hear his teaching. There are two major takeaways for us today. #1. We need to

I. Know that judgment will come. (21:5-24)

Jesus speaks of two distinct events of judgment in this discourse. The first is . . .

The destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem (Read 5-7)

- This is the third time Jesus has pronounced the impending destruction of Jerusalem in Luke (13:34-35 & 19:41-44).
- Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. and the Second Temple was completed around 515 B.C. Herod the Great undertook a massive reconstruction project that caused the new temple to exceed Solomon's temple in beauty and size.
- Some have said that it could have been included among the Seven Wonders of the World. (Stein, 510). It was constructed out of beautiful white stones, massive gold plates, and beautiful ornamentation.
- Josephus said the exterior of the building lacked nothing that could astound a person, and a later rabbinic proverb said: "He who has not seen the temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building in his life."
- But as we have seen, Jesus was concerned with what happened inside of the temple, rather than what the temple looked like on the outside. We tend to see the brilliance of appearance and miss the substance of the matter.
- Pic: It reminds me of some of the great European cathedrals, and even many of the beautiful church buildings here in the States. They look beautiful in external appearances, but there is no substance, no true worship happening among those who come within their walls.
- App: This is a good reminder for us with this building for sale. We are praying that we will be able to continue meeting here after the building changes ownership, but what a building will never define our church. We are the church, and if our hearts are right, it makes no difference where we gather to worship God. Let's pray and watch God work.
- Jesus says, "You see all of this? Not one stone will be left on another." Jesus exaggerates to make his point: the temple will be utterly decimated, and Jerusalem will be the stage of a horrible scene of war.

- *Check out vv 20-24.* Here is the sign that reveals their impending doom. When they see the city under siege, everyone should run to safety. If you're in the city, get out! If you're in the countryside, don't go in!
- It will be so bad that even pregnant and nursing mothers are not even safe. Verse 22 tells us this is part of God's punishment for their covenant unfaithfulness and rejection of God's purposes and salvation.
- The lingering effects will be felt "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," referring to the time when the Gentile world will be open to the gospel and many will receive the salvation of Christ.
- Jesus will then move on to speak of the final judgment when he returns, but before we cover that, we need to understand

What will happen before the end comes? (8-19)

Verses 8-9. There will be many signs but they are not immediate signs the end is here.

- There will be **false messiahs**.
- There will be **social upheaval**: Wars, revolutions, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The effects of sin among people will continue to surface. The same is true for God's creation.
- There will be **physical signs**. Earthquakes, Famine. Pestilences. Great and fearful signs in the heavens will occur.
- Verse 9 says, "these things must take place." When you see it unfold before your eyes, know everything is within God's plan. That's why he says, "do not be terrified." What will produce deep terror and emotional distress for many can actually be a means of comfort for the Christian. In verse 12, it gets even more personal: "And before all this. . ."
- There will be **persecution**. (12-17) Persecution will be intense. It will come from civil authorities and even friends and family. "Some of you will be killed. You will be hated for his name's sake." What do we learn about **persecution against Christians**?
 - **Persecution provides an opportunity for witness (14-15)**. Persecution is not a time to retreat, but to boldly share of our faith in Christ, and in those moments, God by his Spirit will provide wisdom.

Trans: What does this teach us? God loves us and carries us through our greatest difficulties providing just what we need. But that's not all! God *carries us through* that he might *carry us to* our final destination.

- **Persecution provides an opportunity to persevere with God's protection (18-19)**.
 - "Not a hair on your head will perish." In other words, no matter what may happen to us physically, God will not allow his people to experience ultimate harm. Not even death can harm the follower of Christ, because we already possess eternal life. "Death has lost its sting."
 - Persecution and trials test our faith and prove it to be either spurious or genuine. Our faith must be tested, and this is grace from God, because "by our endurance [v. 19]" we will "gain our lives."
 - There is great irony positioned deep within the text. The physical temple, which represented the false religion of the day was torn down, while the new temple, Jesus and his body, the church, will prevail and endure forever.
- **Persecution results from our identity in Christ (12, 17)**. Don't miss this. Our suffering happens because of our unity with Christ. "On account of my name" (v. 12) "because of me." (V. 17). Some might say, "I'll take Jesus and leave the suffering." But how can we reject what he so willingly embraced? And, we can rest in the promises of God. He is with us and he has purposes in our suffering! Burn me at the stake, but know my God will never forsake me! All of this unfolds vividly in the Book of Acts,

Transition: It is important to remember that the people wanted to know when these things would happen,

- Jesus never really answers the "when." He never provides a precise date but only the "what" regarding the kind of signs that will precede his coming. Jesus did not want us to know a precise date, because he wants us to be fully prepared, constantly anticipating.
- **Pic**: Unlike the kids who throw a party when they're parents are out of town.
- We are interested in dates, but Jesus is interested in us being ready for that day. This is why I see so little value in trying to chart out the events of the end times in such microscopic detail as if we can really countdown, one event at a time, until judgment day. We need to keep the main thing the main thing and the plain thing: Jesus is coming back and how we live in preparation for his coming matters immensely!

Trans: So that begs the question: how should we live?

II. Be watchful until Christ returns. (25-38)

- *Read 25-33.* Jesus takes us beyond the fall of Jerusalem to the time when he will return. The fall of Jerusalem is a small picture, a preview if you will, of the coming judgment that usher in the end of the world as we know it.
- This is how you will know the time is drawing near: 1) There will be cosmic signs... the heavens will be shaken 2) Nations will be distressed and perplexed. 3) Fear will grip people all over the world because what is about to

happen on a global scale. And what is about to happen?

- We have three descriptions of the same event: 1) “The Son of Man will come on a cloud with power and great glory.” (27) 2) “Your redemption is drawing is near.” (28) 3) “The kingdom of God is near” (31)
- When Jesus says that he will come on a cloud with power and great glory, it evokes the imagery from **Daniel 7:13-14: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”**
- Jesus has all authority, all power, and all glory. Unlike Jerusalem and all the kingdoms of the world, his kingdom and dominion are forever. Jesus he will return the same way we departed, coming on the clouds.
- We can be certain of these things. Just as we see the beautiful leaves change colors every Fall here in New England, and know winter is coming. so Jesus uses the same analogy in vv. 29-33 to say, “These things are certain. My word will never pass away.” By the way, when Jesus says “this generation,” he has to refer to the generation living when these signs begin to take place.
- That is why we should have our eyes fixed on the skies knowing he will return!

Trans: So how should we respond until he comes?

Watch for Jesus by watching your life. (34-35)

- Watchfulness is the primary exhortation. We should have our eyes wide open, eagerly anticipating his return.
- We caught a glimpse of this in verse 28. “Straighten up and *raise your head!*” Why? “Because your redemption is drawing near.” Those who do not believe will faint with terror! But those who belong to Christ will stand and marvel at his coming as 2 Thess. 1:10 tells us. What will it be for you? When you stand before God, will you be filled with terror or filled with joy?
- Verse 34 says, “Watch yourself.” It means pay close attention to your life. We must pursue holiness so that our hearts are not weighed down with indulging our sinful cravings, drunkenness, and the cares of this world. To downplay the will of God in our lives and deviate from his loving commands is to welcome a tremendous weight.
- There are so many temptations that surround us every day. Satan loves to deceive us into thinking his way brings lasting pleasure. A little harmless lie here, a lustful look there, just a little bit of greed for greater prestige and wealth surely won’t be noticed, and all of the sudden we grow insensitive to the things of God and a weight jumps on our back.
- But here’s the good news: Jesus died not only to take our judgment but to remove the weight of our sin. “There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1) So we are free to indulge in what is good and holy, be filled with the Spirit, and be chiefly concerned with the things of God.

Trans: We need to examine ourselves and make sure we persevere in the faith, because that day will catch many off guard like a trap! How do we do so? In the strength God supplies. That’s why we must also...

Watch for Jesus by praying for strength. (36)

- If you don’t understand that the Christian life is all of grace from beginning to end, you don’t truly understand the message of the gospel. We need God’s grace and strength every single day and we actively pursue it through prayer.
- “God, give me strength for today.” “Lord, help me believe that you will empower to live for you in all things.”
- Prayer is the mechanism by which we draw near to God, depend on him, and receive his strength, and we desperately need God’s strength as we seek to live faithfully to the end.
- **1 Peter 4:7 says, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.”**
- There is a reciprocal relationship between our holiness and our prayer lives. Pursue holiness through prayer and be holy for the sake of your prayers. What’s the motivation? “The end of all things is near.”

Conclusion:

- Every minute that passes, we are one moment closer to the day we die and meet Jesus or the day he comes riding on the clouds of heaven...” and we meet Jesus. Are you ready to meet him?
- “Your redemption is drawing near” Let’s live well until he comes.