

Luke 21:25-36

Jesus said:]²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.²⁷ 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, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees;³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that 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 tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly,³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Luke 21:25-36, 2015

This season of the church year ties together the historical events of God's work of salvation. It ties together the past promises of God, the coming of God in flesh and blood observed at Christmas, our remembrance of God's work today and the future fulfillment of God's promises in the eschaton—the end times--in the future.

We can see this in the Gospel texts we read each Sunday through Advent.

This week it is the future that faces us and you really have to look carefully to see the promise and hope in the passage.

Beginning next week we have two weekends of stories about John the Baptist coming on the scene in Israel proclaiming the coming of the Messiah

On the fourth weekend of Advent we will hear the story of Mary going to visit Elizabeth a short time before Jesus is born.

In the midst of this we busy ourselves in anticipation and preparation for Christmas.

It is the past the present and the future all tied together so that we may remember our hope and our joy is grounded in the promise of our God.

How do you make sense of all this Advent stuff right before Christmas?

This is a very different view of this time of year from the one you will observe in this world we live in, well maybe with a few exceptions.

All apocalyptic material talks about the trials and tribulations, the battle between good and evil of the end times

And we see that acted out every day.

The lesson for today gives us great cause for fear, but that is not all Jesus has to say about the end times.

Judgment is at hand, and yet “redemption is drawing near!”

These two are brought closer together and held in tension like opposing poles of 2 magnets..

This passage does not represent a world renouncing fatalism or despair, nor an escapist withdrawal or paralysis, but a theology rooted in the hope and joy of God’s ongoing redeeming work in the world.

Your redemption is near.

We hold these things in tension, the condition of the world and our hope in the promises of God while we live in the meantime--in between the past promises that give us hope and the future fulfillment of those promises.

Jesus tells His disciples, Luke tells the community he is writing to, and we are told, “stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

I don’t know about you but the things going on in this world make me weary. I am not afraid, but weary of it all.

Every week we can run through the list of tragic events that have taken place, and count the lives lost.

I don't need to run down the list, you already know.
This is the meantime—the time between;
promises made and promises fulfilled.

But, that is not all there is to it. There is more.

There are the events in life that are deeply joyful, powerfully meaningful, and filled with signs of the promise of God. The meantime for Christians is lived with an awareness of Jesus, waiting for Jesus, and coming to know this Jesus for whom we wait in the midst of an eventful, unpredictable, and sometimes even terrifying world.

We are asked in Advent to begin anew with the beginning of this new church year.

Do you remember what it is like to get a fresh start, the feeling of that?

You put the past in its place and hold on to the things of value that give you strength and free your heart for the new day. You confess and forgive so you can look forward to each new day in your individual relationships, in this community of faith, in the communities you are part of away from here.

You are called to live lives of faithful, active waiting in the meantime because you hear again the name of Jesus who holds you in the end of time, because Christ offers you not fear and damnation, but hope and expectation.

God in Christ is coming because God loves you, because God wants has redeemed you.

Even in the midst of everything that is going on in the world, in your personal lives, in the life of this community of faith, and it is not all bad, there is good stuff going on!

Jesus calls you to “Stand up and raise your heads, because you redemption is drawing near while you await the arrival of the Prince of Peace,

the little baby and the risen Lord.

Amen