

Message for Sunday, November 16, 2025

Title: What hair?

Scripture Luke 21: 5-19

Welcome

Announcements: Giving Options, special offering is Pastor's Emergency Fund; United Women of Faith, Tuesday, November 18th at 1PM. Stories of our Thanks and World Thank Offering. Interfaith Class, Sunday today at 2PM-Hinduism; Interfaith Thanksgiving service, Sunday Nov 23 at 2PM; Toy Drive for Sonoyta; Thanksgiving Potluck-Thanksgiving day at noon. Sign up in the foyer; Wednesday night Bible Study taking a break starting on November 19th. Please join in the Advent Study, Sundays at 2PM starting November 30. Study called Seasons Greetings (There is a 47 sec video for this) Decorate the church on Wednesday, December 3 at 9AM

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth.

P: Thus says our God, the Holy One.

L: Be glad and rejoice in this new creation.

P: Celebrate all that is coming to you.

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L: For your weeping shall be met with rejoicing.

P: And your suffering will be overtaken by new life.

L: You shall build homes and live in them;

P: plant gardens and eat from them.

L: Whenever you call, I will answer.

P: When you cry out, I will come.

L: Heaven and earth will be filled with my peace.

P: Everything will become a new creation.

Unison Prayer

Loving and Merciful God, we give you thanks. You bring us strength, when we feel weak; courage, when we cannot stand.

You fill our hearts with your glory and bless our being with your grace.

You protect our lives.

In your care, not one hair on our heads shall perish, nor the smallest flutter of

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peace perish in our souls. Amen.

Offering

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Song

Scripture: Luke 21:5-19 NRSV

⁵ When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶ “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

Signs and Persecutions

⁷ They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸ And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’^[a] and, ‘The time is near!’^[b] Do not go after them.

⁹ “When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰ Then he said to them,

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“Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹ there will be great earthquakes and in various places, famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹² “But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³ This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴ So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, ¹⁵ for I will give you words^[a] and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your souls.

L: The word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

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I'd like to look at you today and say that this scripture is easy. It's easy to understand and it's easy to live by. Now it wouldn't be the first time I lied to you to lure you into a false sense of security, but I'm not doing that today. This is a passage that is naturally confusing and disconcerting. Now it's concerning because it's about the end

of times. It's what we might refer to as an apocalyptic passage. It seems predominantly concerned with the end of time. I don't know about you, but I've never really found the end of times to be something comforting or comfortable to think about.

This passage is also confusing. It's confusing because it ends with "but not a hair of your head will perish." And frankly by any way you interpret this passage people, Christians, have been harmed and killed in the name of their faith. So, what is this passage trying to teach us? I want to lay that out for you right away here at the beginning.

I think this passage wants us to learn about endurance in faith. Bear with me and I'll explain this in more depth as we understand some of the historical stuff around this passage.

This passage can be interpreted in two ways that are predominantly determined by when you think Luke was written. In 70 CE a major event happened in the life of Israel and the early Church, the destruction of Herod's temple by the Roman Legions. This was an event that sent theological shockwaves through both religious groups and is the event responsible for many of the reasons each group became the way it did. Our passage today is directly about the destruction of the temple. If you believe the Gospel of Luke was written before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem then you are going to interpret this passage as a prediction of the future. That Jesus was

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predicting that the temple was going to be destroyed and that he was theorizing what the ramifications of those actions would be. If the temple hasn't been destroyed then the purpose of this story is to warn the followers of Christ to steel themselves to follow Christ no matter what.

The second interpretational option is that the Gospel of Luke was written *after* the destruction of the temple. Since it was written afterwards this passage is not theorizing the ramifications, but talking *about* those ramifications. If the temple has already been destroyed then the purpose of the story is different as well. Instead of being about steeling ourselves to follow Christ, the author of Luke is suggesting that we see the testimony of those who have already lived through bad times as the example to emulate and hold on to.

I tend towards the second interpretation. This is not because I think there can't be prediction in the Bible, it's because if I'm looking at it to try and understand what it means for us today then the second interpretation makes more sense. You see this isn't about being ready and following Christ. It's about remembering people like Stephen in the book of Acts who was brought to trial and died for his faith. It's about putting our faith, not in the temple made by human hands, but relying on God to walk with us through the bad times.

I have had this problem with persecution complex with Christians for a long time. I grew up and lived around many theologically conservative people. Some of whom I still have great respect for, yet I heard many teachings and much encouragement about us remaining faithful to Christ because the end is coming. That *is not* the point of the Christian faith. It is that our faithfulness with Christ “will gain your souls,” to put it as our scripture does today. It’s about walking in faith every step of the way and trusting in God and Gods leading as opposed to the strength of the church building.

Most of us have lived long enough to experience this. We have experienced high times and low times in our lives. Times of plenty and times of scarcity. God doesn’t promise that everything will be okay, that is not what “but not a hair on your head will perish,” means. It means that God will be with us as we endure whatever is coming our way. God never leaves or forsakes any of us. I for one believe we all need that reminder. Sometimes we can feel so alone, cut off from others. We feel that we are experiencing something that no one else ever has, and we don’t know how to deal with it. The reality is there is nothing new under the sun, and God is already there. God is already watching over you in love, walking with you in love, and encouraging you to listen for his voice. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer/Lord’s Prayer, Song, Benediction, Song (*saving paper*)