

11/16/25
23rd Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from November 9th – November 15th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Embrace us with your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide, we may live through what is temporary without losing what is eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 20:27-38) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 21:5-19

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What does Jesus say to watch out for in verses 8-11?
2. According to verses 12-19, what will life be like for those who claim to be followers of Christ during the time Jesus is referring to?
3. What assurances does Jesus offer to his followers regarding this time of waiting and turmoil?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When you experienced a "temple falling" moment in your life what brought you hope?
2. What faith practices help you during difficult moments in your life?
3. Who has been an example of faithful endurance in your life?

Memorize this verse: "By your endurance you will gain your souls." (Luke 21:19) Where have you found hope recently?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 98. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

What makes this passage challenging is its apocalyptic themes and imagery. And while the popular religious culture has taught us to think of apocalyptic passages as predictions (if not an outright road map) of the end times, that's not the way such passages functioned for those who first heard Luke's Gospel. Apocalyptic passages were offered to help believers struggling from oppression and persecution put their struggles into the larger context of the universal struggle between God and the forces of evil. In this way, such passages provided comfort that no matter how difficult things became, God would not abandon them and that God would ultimately prevail. Thereby encouraging believers to persevere in the meantime and to witness to their faith in times of persecution.

But while the imagery and stark themes of apocalyptic passages may be one thing that makes them hard to interpret, I think an even more challenging aspect is that the conditions Jesus describes (the intense persecution of believers) are absolutely unfamiliar to most of us. There are, of course, Christians who are being persecuted for their faith today and they deserve our prayers and support. But not many of them surround us on a day-to-day basis. In fact, our challenge is nearly the opposite. Our culture isn't hostile to the Christian faith; it's indifferent. Where once we had the support of a culture that actively encouraged congregational participation, that support has withered. And there are now so many options for how we can spend our time on Sunday morning and so many narratives to which we can look for meaning, that going to Church isn't a given. And, even more, it is a less and less attractive option for an emerging generation that often doesn't see the connection between the faith we talk about on Sundays and their day-to-day lives the rest of the week.

Which brings us back to Jesus' ominous words in Luke. Rather than intended to predict some future event, Luke probably used this memory of Jesus' preaching to describe something that was already taking place in his community so that they could see themselves in it and hear once again Jesus' promise that they did not need to worry. After all, he would give them "words and wisdom none of your opponents can withstand" (21:15). This promise transforms the challenges these early Christians are facing into opportunities to witness. Might we also imagine that in the midst of very different challenges, we might also see an opportunity to testify by being joyful. Friedrich Nietzsche, son and grandson of Lutheran pastors who became a harsh critic of the Christian faith in the late nineteenth century, once said that he rejected Christianity in part because so few of its adherents demonstrated the resurrection joy it claimed. It's easy to get bogged down by any number of issues in the world or our own life. But perhaps our response to whatever might be afflicting us is to share words of joy, thanksgiving and praise. Maybe even sing them. I am reminded of the popular Christmas hymn "Joy to the World". Isaac Watts inspiration for this hymn was Psalm 98, the assigned Psalm for this weekend. Moreover, he wrote it to celebrate Christ's second coming. Keeping with the apocalyptic theme of today's Gospel. For God is still at work – both in us and through us for the health of this world God loves so much. And that is cause for singing.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen