

## ENDURANCE FOR YOUR SOULS



**Scripture:**

**Isaiah 65:17-25**

<sup>17</sup>For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. <sup>18</sup>But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. <sup>19</sup>I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. <sup>20</sup>No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. <sup>21</sup>They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>22</sup>They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. <sup>23</sup>They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD — and their descendants as well. <sup>24</sup>Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. <sup>25</sup>The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

**Luke 21:5-11 and 19**

<sup>5</sup>When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, <sup>6</sup>“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.” <sup>7</sup>They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” <sup>8</sup>And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them. And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.” <sup>9</sup>“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.” <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup>there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

(Then it goes on describing terrible disasters – and ends with) <sup>19</sup>By your endurance you will gain your souls.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be good and pure and acceptable in thy sight, Oh, Lord, our rock and our redeemer! Amen.

## ENDURANCE FOR YOUR SOULS

By your endurance you will gain your souls. I am concerned about your souls. That is the job of pastors. We are to have your souls in mind as we minister to you.

So, how are your souls today? Have you endured well this past week?

Some of you have come to me or emailed me very upset. Some of my friends are tearful and afraid. But we must acknowledge that others may be feeling happy and content about the election. Yet, all of us must feel a disturbance in the force. This has been the most difficult campaign in the history of our country. Things are changing. There are protests, fights on airplanes. My mother in her almost ninety-five years never before saw such a response to an election. She said when Dewey was expected to beat Truman there was an uproar over the upset, but not to this magnitude.

### HOW NOT TO FALL APART

There is a sense of disunity and discontent on both sides. How do we deal with these feelings of disruption? This is a challenging Sunday for churches all over the United States. So the *Christianity Today* magazine asked some pastors this week how they were planning to preach after the election.

John Ortberg at the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church said he plans to preach today about how to be a non-anxious presence by being rooted in a power deeper than human political power. His sermon today is titled: "How Not to Fall Apart."

Quest Church in Seattle decided to host a time of lament, prayer, and support last Wednesday evening. Today they will be inviting the congregation to respond by placing a sticky note of lament, confession, and/or an action step on their large wooden cross. They said, "Our hearts are heavy but we must seek Christ's incarnational peace, love and hope."

### THIS WEEK'S LECTIONARY

Last Monday, when I looked at the choices this week for the scripture readings in the lectionary, I had a premonition that Tuesday was going to cause huge turmoil. The scriptures seemed to predict it!

I chose the Isaiah 65 and the Luke readings because they were the most positive. Malachi was also a choice, but that passage started out with: "See

the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant evildoers will be stubble."

On Wednesday the fires in the protests started. People circled Trump Tower threatening to burn it. An effigy of Trump was set on fire. It makes one wonder if Malachi was predicting these days.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians passage was better. It ended with: "Brothers and sisters DO NOT BE WEARY IN DOING WHAT IS RIGHT!" Hillary Clinton used those words in her concession speech.**

### ISAIAH GIVES US HOPE

Carole read our Isaiah 65 passage that gives us hope that God is working in our midst, that it is possible even in the midst of turmoil to create something new and better. Even though many adults and children woke up on Wednesday morning frightful and in tears, Isaiah 65 promises there will be a time when the sound of weeping will no longer be heard and there will be no more cries of distress. And those who feel so much animosity can rest assured that God is working with us towards a time when the lion and the lamb can feed together. We can find our common core values and work together for a better future, to help bring the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

### LUKE

Then we come to our Luke passage today. By the time Luke finished writing these verses, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE was complete. This means that for Luke's readers what Jesus says in Luke 21:5-6 is more a reflection on the temple's destruction than a prediction of it. Luke uses Christ's prediction of the destruction of the magnificent temple to make a statement on the impermanence of human achievement.

Gilberto Ruiz, a professor of theology in New Hampshire comments about this passage's meaning. He said, "In response to their wonder at the temple's beauty, Jesus attempts to divert the attention. Their focus should be on something else.... and we can find that something else in his message just before this statement.

"Before reprimanding his disciples for adoring the beauty of the temple, Jesus had pointed out a woman who he held up in honor before them, a

poor widow who gave a sacrificial offering in the temple (21:1-4). He said: this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

Jesus held the woman up to his disciples as a great example of trusting in God. Then he describes the temple’s destruction and warns that there will be other problems in their future such as false prophets, wars, and other calamities (21:7-12). Here Luke uses language and imagery that is typical of apocalyptic literature like what is found in the book of Revelation.

Apocalyptic literature uses unsettling language and imagery as a means to assure the faithful that they should keep their trust in God even when facing the most challenging of circumstances. While describing the terrible events about to happen, Jesus tells his listeners not to be afraid.

The point is: when bad things happen, and they will, we should “not be terrified” or follow anyone proclaiming that these are signs of God’s judgment and that the end of the world is very near. Instead, we must trust that God remains present in our lives.

Throughout his Gospel, Luke depicts Jesus as a prophetic figure who risks rejection and death to promote his message that God is love and we should love all and serve all. Jesus was a rebel. He was a tender, kind, and loving radical revolutionary who still reaches out to us through these words in the Bible. Jesus is still inspiring us to NOT idolize wealthy prideful people who promote injustice, abuse, and the oppression of the vulnerable.

But the path is not an easy one. Anyone who faithfully follows Jesus can also expect to experience hostility and hatred from time to time. But Christ will help your soul endure.

### **TRUST IN GOD**

So how do we live today in this current quagmire of chaos? Just as God gave Moses and other prophets the capacity to speak to and confront injustice, Jesus himself will provide strength and wisdom for such a time as this. Luke 21 is about trusting in God even in the midst of hardship. (Remember Cassie’s sermon on trust? Encouraging us to trust in God was one of Christ’s main goals for his ministry.)

A close reading of the Luke 21 passage also warns us about becoming too fixated on temporary human institutions. Despite its language and

imagery of destruction, Luke 21 is ultimately a passage grounded in hope, in the hope that God remains present in the world helping our souls endure.

### **HOW CAN OUR NATION HEAL AND FIND PEACE**

Last Thursday Maria Shriver, who writes a weekly peace-making blog, posed a question to Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. The question was: “How can our nation heal and find peace?”

**The Archbishop responded,  
“The only way to peace and healing is to turn to one another and try to understand what motivates such fear and anger.  
The anger over inequality and injustice is real and must be addressed, for a country is only as strong as its weakest and most vulnerable citizens. ....  
Despite great progress, America still faces poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, and more. These are global issues as well.  
It takes time for us to become compassionate and just and to become tolerant.  
But we are good, and we, God’s people, are learning to be more loving and more inclusive and more generous.”**

He adds, “I am often asked what keeps me feeling hopeful in the world. Well, it’s not a “what” that keeps me hopeful, it is a “who.” It’s all of these extraordinary people who are trying so hard to create a world with more joy, and more love, and more sharing. Look in the mirror.”

The Dalai Lama’s response to the question, “How do we heal?” said, “We should focus our attention on all the love that is given on our planet every day, from parents to children, from teachers to students, from doctors and nurses to patients. One realizes that we really are meant for goodness and love and generosity. We will create a better world, even though, sometimes, we want to whisper into God’s ear, “Hurry up!” It does take us time, but we will get there.”

### **SEEK UNITY**

I agree with both of these wise men. We must always seek ways to bring people together rather than promote disunity. Jesus calls us to see that we are all one in the family of God, with the same

hopes and dreams and basic needs for food and love and respect.

No matter how distraught or happy we may feel, our future in this country is very uncertain. So pray. Pray for all of us, pray for peace, and that the ethics of integrity, humility, and kindness will prevail over time.

My daughter, in law school in North Carolina, found great comfort in a devotional that had the perfect message for her on November 9<sup>th</sup>. It is from the little devotion book called *Jesus Calling*, which is written in a format as if Jesus is speaking directly to you.

I invite you to close your eyes and imagine Jesus is speaking this to you directly:

**"Let all your fears and worries bubble up to the surface of your consciousness. There in the light of my presence, the bubbles pop and disappear. However, some fears surface over and over again, especially fear of the future. You tend to project yourself mentally into the next day, week, month, year, decade; and you visualize yourself coping badly in those times. What you are seeing is a false image because it doesn't include me. Those gloomy times that you imagine will not come to pass, since my presence will be with you at all times. When a future-oriented worry assails you, capture it and disarm it by suffusing the light of my presence into that mental image. Say to yourself, "Jesus will be with me then and there. With his help, I can cope! Then come home to the present moment where you can enjoy peace in my presence."**

Amen

**Benediction:**

**My benediction introduction is an excerpt from a hymn written for the election by Caroline Gillette:**

**God, may this time of anger be over;  
May we grow past our current divide.  
Make us as one, as sisters and brothers;  
In this good land, may your love abide.**

**And another song writer who said, "Talk of love not hate. Things to do. It's getting late. May your souls endure through the grace of our Lord.**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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