

Luke 21: 5-19

**When some were speaking about the temple,  
how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said:  
“As for these thing that you see, the days will come when not one stone  
will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.  
“They asked him: “Teacher, when will this be,  
and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”**

**And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; f  
or many will come in my name and say: “Or I am he!” and “The time is near!” Do not go  
after them.**

**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.  
Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and  
kingdom against kingdom;  
There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues;  
and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.  
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.  
This will give you an opportunity to testify.  
So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance;  
for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to  
withstand or contradict.  
You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers,  
by relatives and friends;  
and they will put some of you to death.**

**You will be hated by all because of my name.  
But not a hair of your head will perish.  
by your endurance you will gain your souls.**

**Meditation:**

**There's a story about John Wesley who was the founder of the Methodist Movement.  
Apparently he spent most of his life traveling by horseback  
crisscrossing England to share the Gospel.**

**In his journal John Wesley tells this story:  
One night, after preaching to about 500 people in a small village,  
he was walking to the home where he would spend the night.**

**A small group approached him and said: "Dr. Wesley, this is our Sister Mary, who is a  
prophetess. She has received a revelation from God that the world is going to end tonight  
at midnight."**

**To which Wesley responded by saying, "I'm glad to meet you" and  
with a tip of his hat he started walking off toward his host's home.  
The group ran after him, saying, "Dr. Wesley, you didn't understand,  
the world is going to end tonight! What are you going to do?"  
"Well," he replied. I'm going to bed.**

**You see, if our good Sister is correct,  
I will wake up in Glory with Jesus. But if she is mistaken,  
I must get up at four thirty and ride thirty miles on horseback  
to the place where I am to preach tomorrow evening. Good night."**

**True Story!**

**People have been predicting the end of the world for millennia and**

**we are still here!**

**In 2012, some believed that the ending of the Mayan Calendar, signaled the end of the world...**

**In 2011 there was Harold Camping who at first put up billboards saying the world was coming to an end on May 21<sup>st</sup> and when that day came and went, he went on record saying that he was 7 months off and it would really happen on Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>....**

**and who could forget all the worry and hype of Y2K?**

**Even Jesus and St. Paul, 2000 years ago told their listeners that the world was passing way soon... and yet...we are still here!**

**Now...every time someone talks about the end of the world... or, for that matter, reads the Book of Revelations literally they will suggest that all you have to do is to listen to the news to see that they are right...and that indeed the end is near at hand..**

**and I suppose, if you take this Gospel and the book of Revelation, literally there does seem to be more than ample evidence to prove them right...**

**IF you take this Gospel literally... But of course we don't....**

**but just in case you are tempted to read Scripture literally**

**may I invite you take a closer look at Dr. Wesley's response to end of the world predictions!**

**“Well...I'm going to bed because if she's right then I'll be waking up in the glory of Jesus!”  
but if she's wrong,**

**I need some sleep, because I have work to do!**

**Now... there's a man of Faith who knows how to  
Trust in God's mercy and God's Love!**

**For me, that is exactly the point:**

**how do we become people who know the Mercy and love of God...  
how do we become people of Faith in the face of all of our fears and  
ultimately, in the face of our own mortality.**

**Human Beings have always known, even if they don't like to admit,  
their ultimate powerlessness when coming face to face  
with the power of nature...  
and Human Beings have always struggled with what  
lays on the other side of the grave.**

**And so...if we could just get some control over the uncertainties of life,  
if we could just make sure that we and those we love would ultimately be "ok"...Well then,  
we say to ourselves, we could relax and enjoy life a little more!  
Wouldn't that be nice!?!**

**Sure...but when we are honest with ourselves  
we know that being in control is simply an illusion....  
but we engage in that fantasy because it at least, for a short time,  
it helps us to feel comfortable, safe and secure.**

**But the sense of control never lasts very long...  
and so the anxiety begins again...**

**I think one of the reasons I like John Wesley's answer to Sister Mary,  
because it exemplifies for me, the true meaning faith...which is 'to trust'.**

**Now, I'll be honest, I don't know that much about Methodists or John Wesley, but at least in this story, he has the qualities of humor, humility, personal initiative, and faith.**

**These qualities are hugely valuable.**

**So let's look at them briefly....**

**Humor.**

**I've been thinking a lot about this lately...**

**To have a sense of humor doesn't necessarily mean taking life any less seriously...**

**I think having a sense of humor helps me to realize**

**that I am not responsible for EVERYTHING! and for EVERYONE!**

**it helps us to take life and ourselves a little less seriously...**

**Humility...**

**Humility, we must remember, is not being a doormat...**

**Humility is recognizing the gifts and talents we have been given and**

**then using those gifts and those talents in service with love**

**for the good of all creation.**

**Personal Initiative...**

**A lot of people talk about trusting God and having faith,**

**but sometimes, often it is just an excuse not to even try to rectify an unjust situation,**

**Having personal initiative, to me, is being willing to make the effort**

**to right a wrong, to feed the hungry, to work for justice**

**even in the face of huge obstacles...**

**And then Faith....**

**Being a person of Faith, I think incorporates those 3 qualities: humor, humility and personal initiative with the awareness that there is a larger, higher Power and Grace in the universe who cares about each of us.**

**This Higher Power and Holy Grace is not an old man sitting on a throne...  
That image looks more like a Roman Emperor than the Creator of the Cosmos...  
No...this Holy Grace is a mysterious Grace...it is a Spirit, a power, an Energy that is neither male nor female,  
it can not be controlled and it certainly cannot be earned just because we are 'good enough' according to someone else' standards..**

**Holy Divine Grace permeates everything...  
we are like fish swimming in an ocean of Grace!**

**The Spirit belongs to everyone and to no one!  
We don't need to earn it or achieve it, because we already have it...  
we only need to be willing to be open to it....  
and then with new eyes and an open heart  
we will see the true miracle of life.**

**The real question for each of us...  
isn't when is the end of the world going to happen,  
but when is the Reign of the God going to be seen everywhere, by everyone?  
When will we all have eyes and hearts to the Presence of Grace EVERYWHERE!!**

**I don't know...no one knows.  
But being afraid of some future event is really useless...  
matter of fact, Fear is always counter productive...**

**Let us love extravagantly now.**

**Let us extend mercy everywhere...  
let us scatter joy....offer compassion....  
Let us see Beauty, laugh till our ribs hurt,  
feed the hungry and give a hug to the lonely....  
NOW.**

**and when we do any of this...  
we will be able sleep at night ...  
we will see what needs to be done when the morning light shines...  
we will connect to one another  
with peace and hope, love and joy!  
we will not live in fear....**

**So....let us go forth from our chapel today,  
grateful for the opportunities to show love and kindness,  
grateful for the ability to laugh and feel joy,  
grateful that it is not all up to us even as we do our best to  
live as God's presence...  
and grateful that even as we sleep this night...  
that the Holy Mystery of Love is ever present.**

**Amen.**