**11/13/22**

**Open with a Close**

**Luke 21:5-19**

Have you ever heard of the saying, “open with a close?” Well, it is definitely a popular sales principal. I warn you though, I am not up here as a salesman, but as a messenger. I am doing my best to digest the Word just like each and every one of you does day in and day out. However, as I continually researched and pondered what I was going to deliver today, I found it vital to present my closing statements at the beginning.

So, with that being said, here we go! “What is needed in the midst of hard times is faithful endurance. As Jesus tells his disciples, those who endure will find their lives.” (5) This reminds me of a Bible Passage from 1st Corinthians, Chapter 9, Verses 24 to 27. “You know that many runners enter a race, and only one of them wins the prize. So run to win! Athletes work hard to win a crown that cannot last, but we do it for a crown that will last forever. I don't run without a goal. And I don't box by beating my fists in the air. I keep my body under control and make it my slave, so I won't lose out after telling the good news to others.” (6) We learn that we are always called to share the good news, and keep a constant pace about ourselves. We may be in a constant race or fight, but that ultimate victory is always in our sights.

We even learn that “When asked what he would do if he knew that the world was coming to an end, Martin Luther replied that he would go out and plant a tree. In other words, he would continue on doing what he would normally do. We are challenged to live each day as if Jesus may come. We tenaciously continue to believe in God’s love and grace. We continue to use our gifts and talents in the service of others. We don’t stop sharing the blessings that God has abundantly poured into our lives.” (5)

“We are called as Christians not to waste our time speculating on the time of Jesus’ eventual return. Rather we are called to live the powerful lives that are ours because of the cross of Jesus Christ—his life, death and resurrection.” (5)

Alright, let me get off my soapbox here. Now, that I have managed to get way ahead of myself, I am going to draw things back a little bit. I would like us not to forget about last week’s message either. When we met here for Worship last Sunday we were introduced to the Sadducees and their trickery. They created a story about a widow who married seven brothers in succession. Unfortunately, no children were birthed to carry along the family name and legacy. Now, the Sadducees focused on who the widow’s husband would be in the afterlife. Their trickery was met with a quick and decisive response. They were quickly reminded of their limited thought process on faith and principals here in this earthly life. They were educated on the nature of the resurrection, and the everlasting life we will be afforded through our faith. However, the Sadducees did not feel the resurrection was a Biblical principal. So, Jesus educated them by referencing from the Pentateuch, specifically using Exodus, Chapter 3, Verse 6, to provide scriptural basis for belief in the resurrection from the dead. He did this so that it was relational, and so that it held value and esteem for them.

 I pray that we can remember and use last week’s teachings, and move forward and learn more with this week’s Gospel Reading even more than what we have started with today. Now, with that being said, I have heard that you have been missing the stories that were often part of Pastor Leah’s Sermons. So, I figure I can wiggle a little and meet your desired need, but also do so with my own twist and delivery.

 This week’s research brought about two stories, and the first story goes like this, ““The devil was planning to destroy the world. He called in his chief assistants. Anger stepped in and said that he would set brother against brother. Lust said that he would replace love and turn people into beasts. Greed advocated his passion for turning loose all the covetous cravings of the soul’. Gluttony, Envy and Jealousy each had their audience with the devil as they presented their plans for destroying the world. The devil was not satisfied. Finally, the last one came in and said, ‘I shall talk to people about what God wants them to be. I shall encourage them to follow the plans and purposes of God.’ The devil was aghast at such talk. But the little devil went on, "‘However, I shall tell them there is no hurry. Wait until tomorrow. Don’t start until things are more favorable.’ The devil laughed and said, ‘You are the one who shall go to earth and destroy it. You shall be called Procrastination.’” (3)

Now, the second story is a little bit different, and it reviews “… another trick of the devil which is popular is to place high importance on our accomplishments as seen in the following: “Ted Williams, the baseball star, had a great day at the plate hitting two home runs and going four for four at bat. Besides his fielding that day was remarkable. A young reporter came into the locker room and said, ‘Mr. Williams, you did everything today but walk on water.’ With that Williams turned to the locker room attendant and said, ‘Fill the shower, Today’s the day!’"” (3)

 Two stories of a very different nature for sure… or are they? Procrastination and Pride can easily get tangled up in one another, and both are extremely misleading concepts. So, I ask, “… how much are we like that little devil called Procrastination? We put it off. We feel we have plenty of time, we won’t meet our maker now, but how do you or I know.” (3) How much are we like Ted Williams, the great baseball star? We forget that the blessings and victories we have are first and foremost blessings from God. We did not, and cannot do anything on our own. Procrastination and Pride can and will consume us if we allow them to, but let’s shut the door on them.

So, lets pull things into a little bit more of a perspective here. “In the Gospel story today, Jesus seems to upset the equilibrium of the people he’s talking with. They’re talking about the temple, about how grand it is. It really was grand. The temple at the time had white marble pillars 40 feet high that were made of one slab of rock apiece. It had gold plates as big as two men lining it and solid gold grape vines with clusters that were as big as a man. And what does Jesus say about this grand building? This great institution of Israel? To beware, for the time was coming when not one of those stones was left on top of another one. It would be leveled.” (4)

“The temple was to many Jews the Messiah, and in Jesus’ eyes it was a false messiah … Then, Jesus warns them of other false messiahs, advises them to be prepared, to be ready for the coming of the real Messiah, and assures them he will always be with them.” (3)

“Times will come when those things in which we are tempted to place our faith and trust will collapse. Those things, which we look to for safety and security, will be swept away.” (5)

Jesus “…tells you that his kingdom has nothing to do with your works, that has already been done and you would screw it up anyway. Jesus tells you that it is about your endurance, simply being faithful to him throughout all sorts of times. Jesus tells you that if you remain in Him, He will remain in you. He tells you that He will give you the words to speak in tough times. He tells you that not a hair on your eternal head will be harmed, for He is with you.” (4)

Just remember that “The people of the world want to hear more about God than that God answers all of our prayers and fulfills our greatest dreams. They want to hear what God does in difficult times, also.” (5) “The witness that we will share with those around us will be a life changing witness. Our lives will be changed and so will the lives of those who respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ.” (5) So, continue to do the right thing, and continue to share the good news! Your endurance will pay off as you care for others and share with others just like Jesus did. The Greatest Salesman in the World has offered all of us his eternal and everlasting gifts. Trust the course, share the faith, fulfill your mission!

AMEN

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

 Sunday, November 6

 Lectionary 32, Year C

 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

 or All Saints Sunday

(2) SundaysandSeasons.com

 Sunday, November 13

 Lectionary 33, Year C

 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

(3) SermonCentral.com

 "Be Cautious, Be Prepared, Be Assured"

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Nov 12, 2007

 Scripture: Luke 21:5-19

 Denomination: Lutheran

(4) SermonCentral.com

 When Do You Know When To Quit?

 Contributed by Jay Winters on Dec 30, 2007

 Scripture: Luke 21:5-9

 Denomination: Lutheran

(5) SermonCentral.com

 The Path Toward Victory Series

 Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Nov 24, 2007

 Scripture: Luke 21:5-19

 Denomination: Lutheran

(6) BibleGateway.com

 Passage Search

 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

 Contemporary English Version

**Luke 21:5-19**

As history moves toward God’s fulfillment there will be frightening signs and events. Before the end, believers will draw strength from their relationship to God and will be given the words they need to testify and to endure without fear.

 5When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, [Jesus] 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.”

 7They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” 8And 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.

 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.” 10Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11there 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. 13This will give you an opportunity to testify. 14So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; 15for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. 16You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17You will be hated by all because of my name. 18But not a hair of your head will perish. 19By your endurance you will gain your souls.”