

**Pastor Mollie's Sermon**  
**November 17, 2019**  
**Luke 21:5-19**

Just this past week I have heard the following...

Oh, I can't wait for it to be Christmas.

Oh I can't wait till this snow goes away and we have nice warm weather again.

Is it Friday yet?

Man, I can't wait until my baby is old enough to feed herself.

But also... "Stop growing up so fast, it goes by so quickly"

We are always waiting and looking forward to the next thing aren't we?

I am guilty of saying all of these phrases.

We like to over prepare for upcoming trips, events,

Even meal planning for the upcoming week.

And it is good to be proactive.

It's helpful to plan ahead.

As humans we get very uncomfortable with the upcoming unknowns.

If only we could have all the information and predict the outcome, so we can be that much more ready for whatever is looming in our near future.

Too bad it doesn't work like that.

We are not all knowing, no matter how hard we try.

Some even go to the extent of seeking a fortune teller to secure themselves and prepare for what is next.

But as we will see in our Gospel lesson for today,

Jesus reassures us that we don't know what is to come, but to slow down a bit, be present in the now,

and that we will be provided with the words and wisdom when it's needed.

Be present in the now. Hmmmm.

Not always the easiest of things for us and our societal expectations.

You could say I am a pretty busy gal.

Lots of plates spinning, church, visits, family, husband, worship, meetings...social life....

And sometimes I wonder...

Is my busy status perceived as people thinking that I do not have time to stop and chat or be asked a question?

When I shared my concerns with a parishioner a while back, she replied,

"I think we would be more concerned if you were sitting in a corner, being quiet...this is just who you are!"

While slightly reassuring, I still struggle with this.

So, therefore, this morning, I have a confession to make: My name is Mollie, and I am a busy woman who is always trying to think 2-3 steps ahead.

In today's society, we are more connected than ever.

With smartphones and tablets and laptops and computers, we're never far away from the latest news, the internet, or a phone call to a friend.

We do what we can with these technologies to stay on top of things – to stay on track – to check off the next item on the page-long "to do list".

We fill every minute of the day with something – and, as I have admitted as my first step on the road to recovery this morning, that includes me too.

Even when sitting still and attempting to stop, it seems as though our minds continue to spin at the same fast pace.

As we move from chore to chore on the “to do list”, I have caught myself thinking – in the midst of a current item – thinking “what’s next”?

This entire struggle between “stillness” and “busy-ness” reminds me of a story from the book “*The Miracle of Mindfulness*”, written by Vietnamese Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet, and peace activist **Thich Nhat Hahn**.

**He writes this:**

In the United States, I have a close friend named Jim Forest. When I first met him eight years ago, he was working with the Catholic Peace Fellowship. Last winter, Jim came to visit. I usually wash the dishes after we’ve finished the evening meal, before sitting down and drinking tea with everyone else.

One night, Jim asked if he might do the dishes.

I said, "Go ahead, but if you wash the dishes you must know the way to wash them."

Jim replied, "Come on, you think I don't know how to wash the dishes?"

I answered, "There are two ways to wash the dishes.

The first is to wash the dishes in order to have clean dishes and the second is to wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes."

Jim was delighted and said, "I choose the second way – to wash the dishes to wash the dishes."

From then on, Jim knew how to wash the dishes. It transferred the “responsibility” to him for an entire week.

If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that waits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not “washing the dishes to wash the dishes”.

What’s more, we are not alive during the time we are washing dishes.

In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink.

If we can’t wash the dishes, the chances are we won’t be able to drink the tea either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands.

Thus we are sucked away into the future – and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life.

So, after hearing this, I ask you: do you wash the dishes to wash the dishes in your life?

Can you find a way to silence your soul to be present with God in the here and now?

One who trusts in God will receive a blessing of presence and full acknowledgement of this moment.

We gain confidence knowing that in whatever the circumstances we find ourselves – whether in want or plenty – whether in life or death – God is present and we are richly blessed.

As theologian Jurgen Moltmann observes, “Fish need water in which to swim, birds need air in which to fly, and we human beings need trust in order to develop our humanity.

Trust is the basic element in which human life exists.

Trust is always a mutual affair

It is trust the disciples from this morning’s gospel passage depend as well.

Jesus counsels believers not only *not* to be alarmed but also *not* to plan for those days.

Instead, he invites us to a living and active trust so that we may believe that the various trials that come are actually opportunities to witness

And that when those moments do come, that Jesus himself will equip us to speak and respond when such occasions arise.

We are also being reminded that This text isn't a timetable -- it's a letter of comfort and courage and invitation.

One that we can respond to most faithfully not by predicting the end but by seizing the present moment in which to share our faith and confidence in Christ.

No matter where we go, no matter what may happen to us, no matter how often it may seem like the whole world is coming to an end,

God will be with us, protecting and providing for us that we may see God at work in our lives and give thankful testimony.

And when we question how we will testify or where we will find the words for our witness,

Jesus reminds us, "I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict."

The point in all of this is not to pressure us, and those around us

to find some "silver lining" or "hidden blessing" during the tragedies of our lives.

But to live in the now. See each moment for what it is.

To slow down for a minute...

To recognize the stillness and the quiet of the soul –can be a time to let God enter in –

Which may seem scary or daunting.

However, if we, as people of faith, are able to be fully present in whatever moment we have, listening for what God is up to in our lives.

If we are given the promise of protection and confidence even during the most trying of situations,

what is keeping us from imagining that through our community God is at work fashioning and forming us as here and now people... for the communities that surround us?

We are fast approaching the holidays,

a time that is joyous for some and immensely difficult for others and sometimes a bit of both for many of us.

This might just be a perfect time during which to offer ourselves as a here and now community and believe that Jesus is indeed giving us "words and wisdom" that we might seize this time as "an opportunity to testify."

To slow down, and testify to what you see, hear, experience in the present!

So if you are going to wash the dishes, wash the dishes.

Amen.