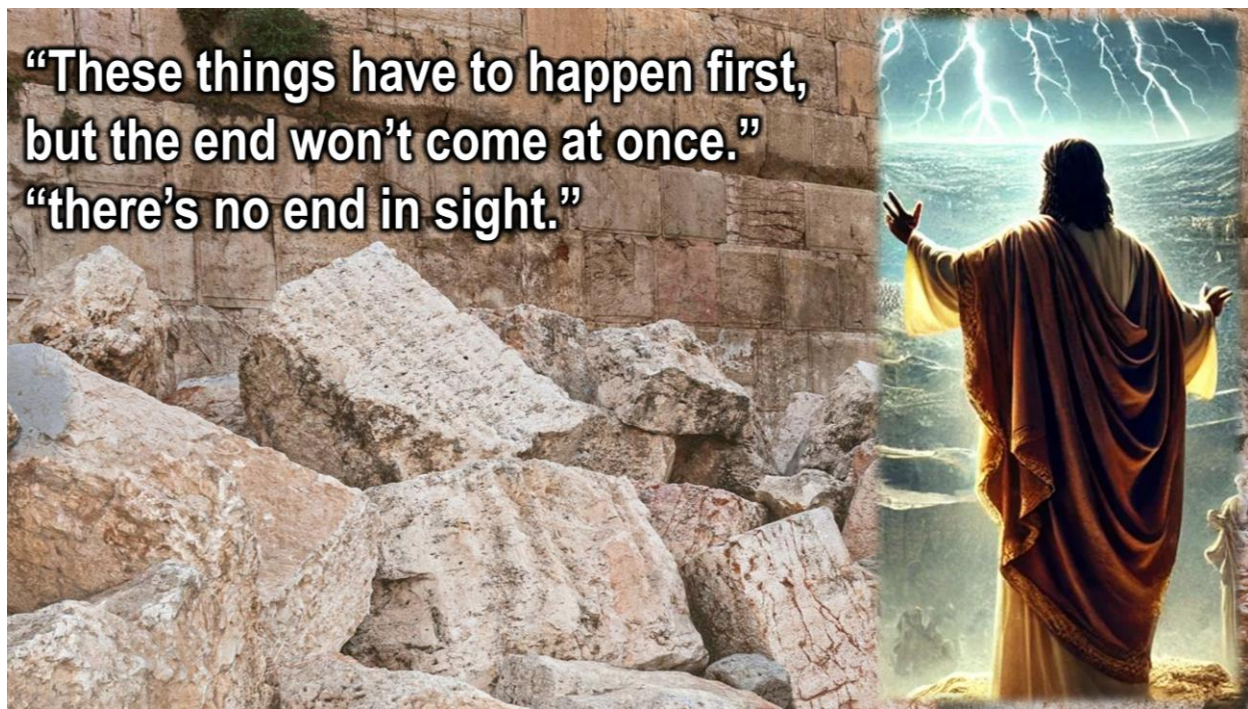




No End in Sight

Sunday, November 16, 2025

Aledo UMC

Pastor David Schultz

Sermon, “No End in Sight” by Pastor Dave

I was shocked Monday morning when I turned on the news to learn that our senators had reached a compromise to end the longest government shutdown in our nation’s history. I tend toward optimism, and I wanted our government to open up again, but the realist in me—or maybe a bit of pessimism in me—fully expected the shutdown to last through Christmas. There just seemed to be no end in sight because the two sides were just too far apart.

That breaking news story was on my mind as I went into the office and began to develop this morning’s services. As part of my preparation, I read the suggested gospel lesson for today from Luke 21—

Gospel Lesson, Luke 21:5-19

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

Let me stop right there: “Some” were talking about the beauty of the temple. But Jesus was no stranger to magnificent vistas. And he wasn’t awestruck by the works of human hands—especially the hands of Herod and his family who were responsible for the construction of the temple. Herod, of course, would soon play a role in the crucifixion of Christ.

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Jesus looked beyond the beauty of the temple to its destruction. And it appears Jesus puts that out there just to spark a discussion with his disciples. So in verse 7—

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

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.”

Monday morning I read this passage in NT Wright’s translation which says, “*These things have to happen first, but the end won’t come at once.*” I confess that I probably had the shutdown on my mind, but when I read verse 9, it came across as “there’s no end in sight.” But that thought squares nicely with scripture. Let’s read on:

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

Jesus was no politician, and he was not given to evasive answers. But his disciples had one critical question. And it wasn’t how? Or why? Or who? All they wanted to know was, *When?* When will all this happen? And what will be the sign that it’s about to happen?

But Jesus doesn’t answer their questions. He doesn’t tell them when. Instead, he tells them that no matter what happens—or when it happens, do not be led astray. Keep your faith in Christ, and not on the things you see happening around you. And then verse 9 jumped out at me: “*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.*”

When will these things happen? Jesus effectively says, “There’s no end in sight.” But in the meantime, the temple will be destroyed. Everything you know—everything you hold dear—will come crashing down. And it happened in 70 AD just as Jesus said it would.

It was shocking. But it was something the disciples needed to hear. Now let me be clear: Many misguided preachers have used this passage to construct a timeline for the end of the world. But that’s not what this passage is about.

First, we must remember what the mission of Jesus was all about. His mission was to bear in his body the sin of the world upon the cross of Calvary. That crucifixion

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was drawing near, and it would mark the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system which was tied to a physical temple. Jesus knew that the temple had to be destroyed right along with the outmoded religious system it represented. So Jesus was letting his disciples in on his mission. He was saying that he was going to smash the old system of animal sacrifice. It was coming to an end; not a single stone of that system will be left upon another.

What is it that we pray? “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus is letting his disciples in on the will of God in this sightseeing trip to Jerusalem. But there’s more.

Jesus is also looking beyond the cross to an historical event that would happen in just forty years—the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. “Not one stone was left upon another.” His followers needed to know that, so they would know what to do when that time of destruction was upon them. And what they needed to do was flee Jerusalem, which, by the way, would fit in with the Great Commission, which was to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel message of God’s love and grace.

Then, Jesus gave his disciples three guiding principles:

1. Do not be swayed by false prophets or false messiahs.
2. Do not be alarmed by rumors of wars and violence.
3. Do not assume it’s the end of the world.

Jesus goes on to explain that the disciples were going to face persecution; however, Jesus also promised that he would be with them through those times of persecution. And no matter how heated the persecution becomes, Jesus hearkened back to the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the book of Daniel by saying, “Still, not a hair on your heads will be lost.” Jesus could make that claim because he stood with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace and when they emerged from it, Daniel tells us that not a hair of their heads was singed (Daniel 3:27).

But what does that have to do with us today? We’re long past 70 AD, and if these words of Jesus are only for that generation, then why bother with them? They don’t relate to me!

If that’s what you’re feeling, I can understand your frustration. And yet, I believe that the “red letters” are important to every generation, including this generation? Does that mean I believe the end of the world is imminent?

Notice how Jesus answers that question by not answering the question. In other words, Jesus doesn’t say, “Beloved, the temple will be destroyed in 70 AD but the world will not end until December 7, 1941.” That date should sound familiar to you because it’s Pearl Harbor Day.

No. In fact, Jesus doesn’t even give clear signs of the end. He says that there will be wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines and epidemics and terrifying sights in the sky. But guess what: There have always been wars and rumors of wars

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and earthquakes and famines and epidemics and terrifying sights in the sky. So what is Jesus saying?

The answer is in verse 19: Jesus is saying that no matter what happens, hold fast. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Trust in God and don't let the predictions of doomsday pull you away from your faith.

I know I'm old, but I'm not that old. Yet in my few short years, I've lived through more than my share of doomsday predictions:

Nuclear war is going to destroy the world.

AIDS or some other disease is going to wipe out the human race.

Population growth is going to create a demand for food and living space that we won't be able to meet. So what are we supposed to do? Systematically cull the unwanted population of our world?

We're polluting ourselves to death.

The world is getting hotter. The world is getting colder. The world is getting "changier."

And then of course, misguided preachers and prophets chime in and say that God is just simply fed up with us and God's gonna wipe us out.

But when I read a passage like Luke 21, I see a couple of important truths: First, I see a reality that has existed throughout the course of human history: wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines and epidemics and terrifying sights in the sky. Those things are like the ocean waves on the beach: they keep rolling up onto shore, wave after wave after wave. So don't be shocked or surprised when they come rolling into your life. They're a part of this world order and will be a part of this world order until the new heavens and the new earth come down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:2).

Second, I see that Christ will be with us as the wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines and epidemics and terrifying sights in the sky come rolling into our lives. So don't give up. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Do not fret and do not fear. Hold fast to the faith that has been instilled in you by the Spirit of God.

Third, Christians will endure to the end. Whether the end is in 70 AD, 2027 AD, or 7070 AD. Christians will endure to the end. Even when there's no end in sight, God will be with us. And we will endure because Christ has promised to be with us until the end. And when the end comes, your faith will become sight. Thanks be to God.