

**THE TWENTY-THIRD
SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
NOVEMBER 13, 2022**



Luke 21:5-6

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**Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print
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***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Steadfast One, there is no wavering in you.

Many: We come boldly, yet uncertain and unsure.

Fountain of truth, you reveal what is true and what is not.

You help us to see and hear so we'll know which road to travel.

Eternal Wisdom, your mind and heart are stayed on loving us.

We set our hearts and minds to love ourselves and others, the way that you do.

***INVOCATION:**

Unwavering One, we are thankful for the clarity found in you. You welcome us into your presence, even when we aren't sure of our approach to you.

We delight in knowing that even when we come stumbling over ourselves, your love is sure to pick us up and steady us. Because you are love, you keep your promises to us. Help us walk unwavering in the love that helps us keep our promises too. Amen.

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Source of Grace, we confess that at times we can be indecisive, wavering, and even suspicious concerning you. Yet, you are loving toward us even

when we are not. We know that you are trustworthy, so we yield our doubts to you. You are persistent in extending grace toward us because your compassion is ever-expanding. Thank you for this moment of transformation. We give you thanks for wholeness. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God is unwavering in mercy, and because we come from God, we know God's grace is sufficient no matter our condition. Grace and mercy are extensions of God's steadfast love and are present for us and in us. Amen.

FIRST TESTAMENT READINGS:

ISAIAH 65:17-25 *The prophet foresees the new heavens and the new earth as a place of joy and peace.*

New creation and new Jerusalem

¹⁷ Look! I'm creating a new heaven and a new earth:
past events won't be remembered;
they won't come to mind.

¹⁸ Be glad and rejoice forever
in what I'm creating,
because I'm creating Jerusalem as a joy
and her people as a source of gladness.

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad about my

people.

No one will ever hear the sound of weeping or crying in it again.

²⁰ No more will babies live only a few days,
or the old fail to live out their days.

The one who dies at a hundred will be like a young person,

and the one falling short of a hundred will seem cursed.

²¹ They will build houses and live in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² They won't build for others to live in,
nor plant for others to eat.

Like the days of a tree will be the days of my people;
my chosen will make full use of their handiwork.

²³ They won't labor in vain,
nor bear children to a world of horrors,
because they will be people blessed by the LORD,
they along with their descendants.

²⁴ Before they call, I will answer;
while they are still speaking, I will hear.

²⁵ Wolf and lamb will graze together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
but the snake—its food will be dust.

They won't hurt or destroy at any place on my holy mountain,

says the LORD.

ISAIAH 12

Hymn of trust

12 You will say on that day:

“I thank you, LORD.

Though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away and you comforted me.

² God is indeed my salvation;
I will trust and won't be afraid.

Yah, the LORD, is my strength and my shield;
he has become my salvation.”

³ You will draw water with joy from the springs of
salvation.

⁴ And you will say on that day:
“Thank the LORD; call on God's name;
proclaim God's deeds among the peoples;
declare that God's name is exalted.

⁵ Sing to the LORD, who has done glorious things;
proclaim this throughout all the earth.”

⁶ Shout and sing for joy, city of Zion,
because the holy one of Israel is great among you.

EPISTLE READING: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

*The apostle Paul gives the Thessalonians a strong
recommendation that they be steadfast in their daily*

*work as they anticipate the unknown day of the
return of Jesus.*

Discipline for the undisciplined

⁶ Brothers and sisters, we command you in the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ to stay away from every
brother or sister who lives an undisciplined life that is
not in line with the traditions that you received from
us. ⁷ You yourselves know how you need to imitate us
because we were not undisciplined when we were
with you. ⁸ We didn't eat anyone's food without
paying for it. Instead, **WE** worked night and day with
effort and hard work so that we would not impose on
you. ⁹ We did this to give you an example to imitate,
not because we didn't have a right to insist on
financial support. ¹⁰ Even when we were with you we
were giving you this command: “If anyone doesn't
want to work, they shouldn't eat.” ¹¹ We hear that
some of you are living an undisciplined life. They
aren't working, but they are meddling in other
people's business. ¹² By the Lord Jesus Christ, we
command and encourage such people to work quietly
and put their own food on the table. ¹³ Brothers and
sisters, don't get discouraged in doing what is right.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 21:5-19**

Jesus encourages endurance under persecution that will surely come.

The temple's fate

⁵ Some people were talking about the temple, how it was decorated with beautiful stones and ornaments dedicated to God. Jesus said, ⁶ "As for the things you are admiring, the time is coming when not even one stone will be left upon another. All will be demolished." ⁷ They asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? What sign will show that these things are about to happen?"

⁸ Jesus said, "Watch out that you aren't deceived. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I'm the one!' and 'It's time!' Don't follow them. ⁹ When you hear of wars and rebellions, don't be alarmed. These things must happen first, but the end won't happen immediately." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Nations and kingdoms will fight against each other. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes and wide-scale food shortages and epidemics. There will also be terrifying sights and great signs in the sky. ¹² But before all this occurs, they will take you into custody and harass you because of your faith. 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 provide you with an opportunity to

testify. ¹⁴ Make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance. ¹⁵ I'll give you words and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to counter or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed by your parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, and friends. They will execute some of you. ¹⁷ Everyone will hate you because of my name. ¹⁸ Still, not a hair on your heads will be lost. ¹⁹ By holding fast, you will gain your lives.

This is the Word of God. It is true and can be trusted.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Bad News and Good News"

In my preaching class at seminary the professor taught us to "always preach the good news of the Gospel." The good news of the Gospel. When I read the Gospel lesson today, DID YOU HEAR ANY GOOD NEWS?! Maybe, in the last two verses, after frightening us with bad news.

In general, I'm an optimistic person. I like sunshine and roses. I want life to be almost perfect. And then I read this passage. That certainly knocked the smile off my face.

First Jesus informs his disciples that the temple will be destroyed. Unfortunately for Jesus, this comment is overheard by the temple authorities and

later Jesus is accused of being a terrorist who plans to blow up the temple.

Next the disciples ask Jesus when these things will happen? I think that's a reasonable question. We all would like to know when we should take our money out of the bank and head for the bomb shelters we built in the 60's.

Instead, Jesus gives us "signs". He first mentions false "gods" who will tell us lies. We will be tempted to "worship false idols." This may seem unlikely, however look at what we worship now; pretty cars, nice houses, gourmet food, speed boats, television, facebook, designer clothes, movie stars, rock stars. You name it, we want it, and we become obsessed. Jesus tells us, "Many will come in my name, saying, 'I'm the one!' and 'It's time!' Don't follow them."

Then Jesus tells us not to be afraid of wars, natural disasters, drought, food shortages, famine, epidemics, betrayal, executions, which will come before everything is said and done. YIKES! But here comes the good news. Jesus says, "¹⁸ Still, not a hair on your heads will be lost. ¹⁹ By holding fast, you will gain your lives." If we can make it through all that bad news, I guess we will be ready for this good news. I can smile again.

When Jesus talks about "gaining our lives", he is talking about a new reality for us. Something new. Something different. A better way to live our lives.

It makes me think about college students who move away from home and live in a dormitory away from people they know. Or those who have to move away from home for a new job. Or, on the other side of our life, when our elderly loved ones need to move to some kind of facility where they are safe and taken care of. That can be terrifying for older folks. It may take a very long time before they "hear the good news of the Gospel" when everything around them is new and different.

One thing that makes me hopeful are the words of Isaiah in our First Testament reading. "¹⁷ Look! I'm creating a new heaven and a new earth: past events won't be remembered; they won't come to mind. ¹⁸ Be glad and rejoice forever in what I'm creating, because I'm creating Jerusalem as a joy and her people as a source of gladness."

Read the rest of the passage again. Hang on to those words. Know that God will never abandon you no matter the changes in our lives. THE WORDS OF JESUS ARE POWERFUL and can move the clouds away if you allow them into your heart.

Anchor yourself to Jesus and hang on to the good news of the Gospel. It can be hard, but if we read the

good news over and over, we can smile again. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with time for silent personal prayer.

God of crisis, God of everyday, God of eternity, we prefer the view of beauty around us, but we are grateful for warning signs that make us more attentive to the hazards of a careless road of life. We give thanks for all who have set an example for us of certainty and assurance amid trouble, conflict, and disaster. In emulating them, when the end of the journey comes for us, we will rejoice.

Sovereign God, you have called us to pray not only for ourselves but for all humanity. We pray for your church everywhere in the world that all your people may pray without ceasing, using whatever name for God they wish.

Bless all those people in government and positions of authority that they may govern with clarity and charity. Sustain all who give themselves to serve those in need; those who teach immigrants, social workers who care for the poor and the incompetent, church visitors who attend to shut-ins and those who send them cards. Bless all our clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, and health services that your work of healing may continue among us.

Merciful Parent, heal your children who look to you for new health and strength; children with RSV, those of all ages with covid or cancer, and tiny babies especially Alistair and Garrett. May they grow strong so they may go to their loving home and be celebrated by their waiting brother, Trenton.

We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

***BENEDICTION:**

As you depart this space, keep watch, and pray that the things you find pleasure in, do not distract you from the One who made all things for you to enjoy. Be unwavering in your openness to the promise of God's love. Let the mind of Christ be in you. Amen.