

St. Paul's Anglican Church
2d Sun Advent; Luke 21:25-33
Dec 9, 2018 (Baptism)

Re. Tom Burr

Last week's gospel reading was St. Matthew's version of the events of the first Palm Sunday; our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem followed by his cleansing of the Great Temple. Luke tells us after these events Jesus taught daily in the same temple and today's gospel is the substance of one of those teachings. While He was teaching, He was harassed by the Jewish leaders who questioned his authority, attempted to cause him to speak against Caesar and debated the reality of the resurrection.

Our Lord's crucifixion is very near; and three days after that, He will demonstrate the truth of the resurrection through his own rising from the dead. But before He leaves this world, He reveals the signs of his return to judge the world. We read Matthew's version three weeks ago on the 25th Sunday after Trinity so I will just review the highlights.

According to Luke, these are the signs of our Lord's return: there will be changes in the sun, moon and stars; there will be **distress of nations; and men's hearts failing them for fear.** The uncertainty of these times will be removed for Christians when we see **the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** Our distress during these last days of natural and manmade affliction will be removed because Jesus tells us **our redemption,** that is, our salvation, **is near.**

Luke is widely recognized for recording historical facts most accurately, and for noting their significance. That may be why after recording our Lord's return to redeem us he also included Christ's warning in the parable of the fig tree. We can easily determine spring is coming through the blossoming of new life on the trees, so we must be just as able to recognize the blossoming our own new eternal life through our Savior's coming again.

Have you ever wondered what the Lord meant when He said, **I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled?** Since many generations have passed and our Lord has not yet returned, this can be confusing even to theologians. It could refer back a few verses when Jesus prophesied of the coming destruction of the Great Temple which was fulfilled about 40 years later, or, **this generation** could refer to the entire human race.

While that sentence may be confusing, He gives us assurance of the continuance and permanence of his truth. **Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.** Everything God created, all of his physical and heavenly creation will end. Isaiah prophesied about a **new heaven and new earth** in his last two chapters; and in Revelation 21:1; John said, **I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first were passed away.**

There will be a new heaven and new earth but the truth of God's word will not be remade; there is no need to change it; his truth remains his truth for all of eternity.

Jesus spoke about his second coming to redeem believers and to judge unbelievers. In the Old Testament reading, Isaiah prophesies about his first coming when a new covenant, a new promise of salvation will be established by a descendant of King David. Isaiah's prophecy points to the joy of our Savior's birth; **everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.** The price of salvation has been paid by our Lord and Savior on the cross.

But it is also a message concerning our Lord's return. He said **Seek the Lord while he may be found.** Hear the urgency; seek a right relationship with Jesus before He returns. **Let the wicked forsake his way; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, for he will abundantly pardon.** Everyone can choose to believe, seek forgiveness and receive the free gift of salvation. This is the message our Lord brought when He first came to preach the gospel, and, it is repeated with much more urgency as we are called to prepare for his return.

But, accepting Jesus as our Savior, and desiring to live a

godly life, does ensure we will always do what is right. Saved Christians sometimes put too much emphasis on personal preferences and practices. This was the case that St. Paul addressed in the epistle (15th chapter of Romans). The Jewish and the Greek, or Gentile, Christians were bickering over the need to follow every one of the practices outlined in the Jewish tradition.

Growing tired of this nonsense, Paul gave then a verbal whipping. **Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.** Let God, who is the source of endurance and encouragement, lead you, both Jew and Gentile, (every Christian denomination), to model the life of Jesus Christ. Do what Jesus did, do what He commanded, and do it like Him, because of love.

Do this, Paul said, and **you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.** Praising and serving God, in accordance with his truth found in Holy Scripture, unites all Christians in the task of sharing the Good News of the Gospel. This is best accomplished when we obey Paul's directive to **receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.** We are not saved because of anything we have accomplished; we are brought into the glory of God by our faith in the atoning death of our Lord.

So, if we heed Jesus' warning in the gospel of his coming **with power and great glory** and prepare for his return, and if we listen to God's words given through Isaiah and **seek the Lord while he may be found** by accepting Him as our Savior, and if we follow Paul's directive to **with one mind and one mouth glorify God receiving one another as Christ received us**, what does our life look like? And, what will people say about us?

How many watched some of the news casts about President George Bush or his memorial services? I am not favoring either political party when I say He was successful in his political and personal life. But what was most prominent in the reflections given by family, associates and friends was that he held fast to what we would call godly principles. Even in adversity he remained kind and gentle, and full of love. He was even admired

and respected by his political adversaries. (We could use a huge dose of that today in government and in every community!)

Listen to an excerpt from his 1991 State of the Union Address, “We have within our reach the promise of a renewed America. We can find meaning and reward by serving some higher purpose than ourselves, a shining purpose, the illumination of a Thousand Points of Light. And it is expressed by all who know the irresistible force of a child's hand, of a friend who stands by you and stays there, a volunteer's generous gesture, an idea that is simply right.”

During George Bush's very public life, everything he did or said was watched and evaluated; and I would say he was a pretty good Christian example. He was not perfect but he did his best to follow Paul's directive to **with one mind and one mouth glorify God receiving one another as Christ also received us.**

Setting a good Christian example is important for all of us. Phoebe Sophia Toler will be baptized in a few minutes, and as she grows, she will watch everything we do, and listen to everything we say. Like it or not, you and I will be her examples. Of course, her primary role models will be Josh and Hillary, Bob and Becky, (Josh parents) and the rest of her family, but she will also learn how to be a Christian by watching each of us.

Advent is the season to prepare for our Lord's return; we should also use it as a time prepare to be the best Christian example we can be for Phoebe, and for all of God's little children.

Now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, majesty, power, dominion and glory, both now and evermore. Amen.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

St. Luke xxi. 25.

AND there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with

perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Romans xv. 4.

WHATSOEVER things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in

believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Isiah 55

An Invitation to Abundant Life

**55 “Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;**

**and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!**

**Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.**

**² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?**

**Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in fatness.**

**³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.**

**⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.**

**⁵ Behold, you shall call nations that you know not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.**

**⁶ “Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;**

**⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

**⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.**

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

**so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,**

**¹¹ so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**

**¹² “For you shall go out in joy,
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**

**¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off.”**