

Advent 2024

Faith That Turns Sadness into Joy

Luke 21:25-33

Intro

In Zec. 14 we get a vision of Israel's future in exile. The picture is bleak, revealing a future filled with being subjected to war, captivity, exile, and abuse at the hands of evil foreign powers. As we know from the Scriptures and from other historical accounts, this happened. Men such as Ezra, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel gave us a glimpse into what this era was like. Later we get extra-Biblical writings such as Maccabees and Judith which chronologued the further abuses the Israelites faced at the hands of the Greeks.

No doubt things seemed hopeless for the people of Israel at many points. When they were slaves in Egypt for 400 years, it appeared as if there was no hope in sight but then God raised up Moses. When they were exiles in Babylon/Persia, things seemed hopeless but God raised up Daniel, and Esther, and others to deliver and encourage the people. God raised up Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah to resettle and rebuild the land in those days also.

Like Israel was captive to foreign powers and subjected to abuse, the world is captive to Satan and faces abuse at his hands. Even the church is not immune to the work of evil in this world. The story of God is filled with accounts of situations which seemed helpless until God miraculously shows up at just the right time. Think of how God provided water to Israel in the desert, or David to face Goliath. Like one of the mighty deliverers of old, God has sent Christ to us at just the right time and when all seemed lost.

However, Christ is altogether different from any other savior in that while He certainly came to deliver Israel, He also came to deliver the whole world from the tyranny of Satan. Today we will see from Christ's own mouth, that true Christmas hope is about having faith in Him. When our faith is rooted in Christ alone, even our greatest sorrows only serve to remind us that the time for our salvation is near.

Discover

I. A world in turmoil scarred by the presence of sin produces fear in people (25-26)

- A. We should expect an uptick in natural disasters as we approach the second coming of Christ and these things terrorize the world.
 - 1. Many turn to science for answers and this isn't all bad, but science can not offer us ultimate hope.
- B. We should expect an uptick in political unrest as the second coming of Christ approaches and this also terrorizes the world.
 - 1. Many turn to political solutions to quell the unrest, but human political solutions will always fall short because of sin.
 - 2. The only King who can actually bring us peace is Jesus.
 - a) It's as the famous bumper sticker states, "no Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace."

II. Christ's presence in our world means judgement for sinners, but redemption for His faithful (27-28)

- A. Because of who Jesus is to the rebellious world, his coming is terrifying to them.
 - 1. Those twisted by sin know Christ only as the fearsome and wrathful God of this world, for that is what He is to all steeped in rebellion against Him.
 - 2. The presence of Jesus means the judgement of sin and for those who treasure sin above all else, this is terrible news.
 - 3. Much of the world responds to the presence of Jesus similarly to the way Herod responded to His first coming. They seek to resist Him at all costs.
- B. Because of who Jesus is to us, that which terrorizes the world encourages us.
 - 1. For those of us who are in Christ, we know Christ as the Lamb who was slain in our place; the judge who is also our advocate and who took His Father's righteous wrath upon Himself so that we can be saved.
 - 2. Because we know Christ as Savior as well as Lord, His coming is not a threat to us but means our final victory!

III. Advent serves for us as a reminder to pay attention to the seasons of the world (29-32)

- A. Jesus likens watching the world for signs of the end to watching the trees for signs of summer.
 - 1. For the wise Christian, these things can be known. We can't say exactly when He will return but we can tell when we are getting close to the season of our redemption.
 - a) We have lived in a long winter, but summer is near and the rising difficulty we experience in this world only goes to show us that we

are near this glorious summer season which we have so longed for!

- B. The generation of the wicked will live to see Christ's day.
 - 1. By "this generation" Christ is most likely referring not to the specific group of people who happen to be living during that era, but rather to the age of the wicked rebels against God.
 - a) In other words, when Jesus does finally return to usher in His everlasting kingdom, there will be people of this wicked generation who are still living to see it. This seems to be the best way to understand what Christ is saying here giving the context of the rest of Luke.

IV. Advent serves as a reminder for us to root our lives in Christ alone (33)

- A. When Christ is revealed, this current age will fade away.
 - 1. When this happens, the deeds of all will be finally exposed.
 - a) The worldly will be revealed to be the evil devil worshippers that they are and they will face their final judgement.
 - (1) 2 Peter 3:10
 - (2) John 5:29
 - (3) John 3:20
 - b) The Christians will be shown as having been redeemed and restored to glory in Christ, and will reap their eternal reward in Him.
 - (1) John 5:29
 - (2) John 3:21
- B. Every person who has built his or her life on Christ will find that we have a lasting home in Him.
 - 1. Matthew 7:24-27
 - 2. John 5:24

Nurture

Who is God? He is the Lord who came first to redeem and is coming again to restore all things.

What has He done? He lived, died, rose, and ascended so that everyone who places his faith in Him may have our dread replaced by faith and hope.

Who are we? We are those who have placed our faith in Christ alone.

What is God calling us to do? Pay attention to the season we are in and rejoice that our redemption is coming soon!

Act

Charles Dickens gave us the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, and how he faced divine spirits who revealed his own folly to him in order to bring about repentance and good in and through him. In a way, Christ has done this for us all and He calls us to do this for others.

This Christmas we have the opportunity to keep Christmas, not merely by being good ourselves (though this is greatly encouraged for the Christian) but by telling everyone about how Christ desires to turn our greatest fears into hope through faith in Him.

I believe our takeaway this week is to be encouraged ourselves, to lean into Christ when we are struggling, and to spread the message of hope which can only be found in the gospel of Christ, and can only be possessed by repenting of our sins and believing in Christ alone for our salvation.

Let's go and pass the light!