

**“STRONG TESTS NEED STRONG FAITH”**

**Pastor Mike Corwin**

**TEXT: LUKE 21:5-19**

**GOD’S WORD: ISAIAH 12**

**I – YOUNG FAITH:**

It amazes me sometimes of what our minds remember and recall. I remember being a boy in Mrs. Durfler’s fifth grade class at the Southeast Elementary school in Crestline, Ohio. I can’t tell you what I learned that year or the grades I got. I do remember that she was a good teacher and I liked being in her class but that’s about it. But there was one event that I must have considered to be pretty significant because I can still remember it today.

There was a big news story that the world was going to end on a particular day of that school week. The news had it on all the channels and we watched it at home. They were predicting the day and the time that this was going to happen. They even told about how we would see Jesus coming to earth riding on a cloud and then the earth would somehow self-destruct. My faith was pretty small at that time. I was taken to Sunday school and did the vacation Bible school thing in the summer. I had some idea of who this Jesus person was. I had even heard the preacher drone on from time to time about the end of the age as he called it and how someday Jesus would come back and claim the earth and the people for God in heaven. I think I even heard the reading from the Bible that talked about a “new heaven and a new earth” but that’s about all I knew at the time. I didn’t know about a bunch of signs that were supposed to take place and about how people needed to know Jesus personally before that all happened. All I know is that when the day came that week that this Jesus person was supposed to ride his cloud into Crestline, Ohio I was not too keen on going to school. But my parents, who didn’t seem worried at all, said I had to go, afraid or not! Sooooooo, as usual I got up, got dressed, and got dropped off at school by dad.

As I remember, none of the kids paid much attention to Mrs. Durfler that day. We spent most of our time looking out the window at the clouds to see if any of them had a saddle on them. When the appointed time came that it was all supposed to happen Mrs. Durfler allowed us all to go and stand at the window and watch the sky until the time had come and gone without Jesus riding his cloud. It was over that fast and we went back to business as usual and had forgotten the whole thing by recess.

**II – TEXT:**

Now I’m older. My faith is much stronger. I know that the world will someday end and that Jesus will indeed come again to claim those who believe and follow him for the Kingdom of God. I know that there will be a new heaven and a new earth as it says in revelation and I know because of my belief in

Jesus as my Lord and Savior I will be in that Kingdom. But the question becomes...what until that time. I find the answer in passages such as this one from the Gospel of Luke.

### **Luke 21:5-19 (NLT)**

<sup>5</sup>Some of his disciples began talking about the majestic stonework of the Temple and the memorial decorations on the walls. But Jesus said, <sup>6</sup>“The time is coming when all these things will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!” <sup>7</sup>“Teacher,” they asked, “when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to take place?” <sup>8</sup>He replied, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and saying, ‘The time has come!’ But don’t believe them. <sup>9</sup>And when you hear of wars and insurrections, don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place first, but the end won’t follow immediately.” <sup>10</sup>Then he added, “Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup>There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup>“But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. <sup>13</sup>But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. <sup>14</sup>So don’t worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, <sup>15</sup>for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! <sup>16</sup>Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you. They will even kill some of you. <sup>17</sup>And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head will perish! <sup>19</sup>By standing firm, you will win your souls.

Jesus is with his disciples in the Temple at Jerusalem. His followers are amazed at the construction of the Temple and all the decorations on its walls. What a beautiful place it was to honor and worship God. Jesus though sees a teaching moment and starts into what is commonly known as his “Apocalyptic Discourse” which actually runs through verse 36 of this chapter. It can also be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark as well.

The Temple is the symbol of their faith. Solomon built it and it had been worshipped in ever since. It had seen its troubles over the years and had been conquered and ravaged by invading armies, from the Babylonians to most recently the Romans. Yet it still stood after some needed remodeling and was still the center for worship and religion to the people. Yet Jesus tells them this bastion of their faith will be completely demolished. It was no longer be the Temple they know.

They ask him when this will happen and he tells them four signs will begin the whole process:

- There will be imposters who claim to be him and telling the people the time has come.
- There will be war and rebellions in all the lands.
- There will be all kinds of natural disasters.

- Fearsome supernatural signs in the heavens will occur

We can make the argument that all of these things have already come to pass and are going on right now in all the world. But then he adds another. He says that there will be a time of great persecution. It becomes obvious as the verses go on that he is talking about Christians. He is talking about his followers being the ones who will be persecuted. This has been going on for centuries and with the emergence of groups such as the Taliban and ISIS we have seen it escalate. It started with the Romans feeding people to the lions but it has continued on today with their beheading. Such things are taking place all over the world. But Jesus says not to worry about it. He'll give us the words and wisdom we need to stand up in the face of such persecutions. Trials and tribulations give his followers the opportunity to bear witness to their faith. He tells us that by standing firm...by having courage and stamina in the face of troubles...by preserving our spiritual integrity...we will win our souls...we will have everlasting life.

### **III – HOW:**

This passage answers a very important question in your life as Christians. As Pastor Becky and I have walked you through the Gospel of Luke we have told you numerous times **“Where you are going.”** She preached on this just last week. About going to heaven and being with Jesus when your life here comes to an end. We finished singing about the fact that we can only imagine what it will be like when we get there and how we will react.

We have also preached extensively about **“How to get there.”** If you've been in this church for any length of time then you know that the way to heaven is by believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as the Messiah. You get to heaven by having him in your heart as your Lord and Your Savior. Salvation has been proclaimed from this pulpit in every way shape and form and will continue to be.

What maybe we sometimes forget to take the time to answer and explain is the third important question, **“What do I do in the meantime.”** How do I live between the cradle and the grave...between life and death? After I find Jesus, after I accept him into my heart, what must I do? Does sitting in a pew napping each Sunday get me through life? Do I sit in the window Each and every day and watch the clouds until I see Jesus coming with power and great glory it says in verse 27 later in this morning passage? And OOOOOOOO am I more than a little scared at all the things that are supposed to happen as stated by Jesus and later in the book of Revelation.

### **IV - TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS:**

It is easy to tell you that you need to put your faith into working for Jesus. Easy to tell you that you need

to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Easy to tell you that you need to read your Bible, go to church, and tithe. You've heard those things over and over again in various forms and I hope you are hearing those things and trying your best to follow them.

But what about the need to persevere for your faith. How does your faith do when you are faced with trials and tribulations? I don't think much about what's coming at the end of time because I'm too busy trying to deal with what is bombarding me now. How about you? Do you need to worry about the sky turning color or do you need to worry about what's going on in your life right now?

- How do you handle an abusive spouse or partner?
- How do you handle the unruly child?
- How do you handle the loss of your job, a pay cut, or downsizing?
- How do you handle a law suit or being drug into court for a divorce or child custody?
- How do you handle being disowned by your parents or your children?
- How do you handle the death of a loved one?
- How do you get through the diagnosis of cancer, tumor, Multiple Sclerosis, congestive heart failure, or other debilitating or life threatening medical problem?
- How do you handle old age and all the problems it brings with it?
- How do you handle a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer?
- How do you handle suicidal thoughts?

And this list could go on and on. But it all shows the fact that we have enough to worry about each and every day of our lives without worrying about what happens at the end. And the answer is the same one that Jesus gave us...KEEP THE FAITH!

#### **IV – STRONG FAITH:**

We do all the disciple things to build and sustain our faith and we keep doing them to deepen and strengthen our faith. The stories of the martyrs are fascinating in the fact that they had such faith and belief that they could sing while being torn apart by animals or burned alive! They proved that Strong faith withstood strong tests.

Strong faith will get you through whatever calamity this world throws at you. This kind of faith allows you to face the end of times unafraid. This faith allows you to face the doctor and the diagnosis without worry. This kind of faith will even allow you to face the end of your earthly existence unafraid because your faith lets you know what's ahead and it's nothing to worry about. Your faith will carry you straight to the arms of your resurrected Lord and Savior where you will reside for all of eternity. There is absolutely nothing in this life that can't be overcome by your faith in Jesus Christ and his love for you.

Stand firm in your faith and win your soul!

AMEN