



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org

November 28, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

1st Sunday in Advent

First Lesson: [Genesis 19:15-17, 23-29](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Thessalonians 3:9-13](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 21:25-36](#)

The Lord is Coming: Prepare!

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from Him who was, who is, and who is to come: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Were any of you caught off-guard this last Thursday? Did you wake up, look around and think *hey, it's Thanksgiving?* Did it kind of sneak up on you and surprise you? I doubt it. You turned on a radio and you were probably listening to Christmas music the last three weeks. That should have told you that Thanksgiving was getting close. There were all the ads, there was all the anticipation of getting together and traveling and what not. Thanksgiving doesn't really surprise us or sneak up on us at all, does it?

The whole point of what Jesus was saying to His disciples on Tuesday of Holy Week (what I read to you from Luke 21) was to remind Christians of all times not to let something pretty important sneak up on them and catch them unaware. His disciples had asked Him to look at how beautiful the temple was as they were there. He told them not a stone was going to be left on top of another. It was all going to be destroyed. The disciples asked, "What are the signs of this? How can we know when this is going to happen?"

In the lead up to what I read to you, Jesus goes back and forth. He starts out talking about some of the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in 70 A.D. and the terror and the difficulty that would come on the people living in Jerusalem at that time as Titus ended up destroying the city. But then He also went into using that as a picture, not only of the destruction of Jerusalem but when Jesus would come back at the end of the world. The last day would come and the world would be destroyed with fire. Those who aren't connected to Jesus would spend eternity in hell. Those that are connected to Jesus would be taken to their final redemption (the whole purpose of Christ's life and death in our place) and they would live forever with Jesus in heaven. So

He talks about some of the signs of the times so that people could be prepared, not just for the destruction of Jerusalem but also for the end of the world as a reminder to Christians that there are a lot of things you are going to see in life that should remind you to consider what is your relationship to Jesus.

If He comes back now, are you ready to meet Him? Are you connected to Him by faith? Or have you let other things become much more important in your life so that He is just kind of an afterthought? His coming at the end of time, or His coming to call you out of the world personally might catch you unaware. It might just spring a trap on you as Jesus said. That's why Jesus takes all this time to tell us **The Lord is Coming: Prepare!** Always be ready. Always be focused on what is the most important thing in your life. It isn't leftover turkey and it isn't family getting together, as wonderful as those things might be. It's your relationship to Jesus Christ. And the devil is constantly trying to separate you from Him and tell you other things are more important and more vital in your life right now than Jesus.

This morning Jesus tells us the folly of that kind of thinking. He says, ***"There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth nations will be in anguish, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the surging waves..."*** In other places He talks about signs in nature: earthquakes, famines, floods and different things like that.

I got up this morning and looked at my phone and saw there was an earthquake in Peru. I see there is going to be flooding in British Columbia. That isn't us... who cares? That's probably often my response, the cold, heartless being that I am. But I think what God is trying to tell me here is when you see those kinds of things around the world; ask yourself if you're ready to meet Jesus. Is Jesus still the most important thing in your life?

We can become so inundated with some of these kinds of things, some of these signs that have been here since that generation was here, that we don't pay much attention to them anymore. Our God would tell us that's a mistake, like when He tells the parable about the fig tree. He says when you see the leaves coming, you know summer is coming. When we see these signs in nature and among nations and wars and rumors of wars (ships sailing through the Taiwan Straits; Russia and Ukraine having military exercises at their borders. The threat of war is there constantly and we're just used to it because it isn't in our neighborhood. What do we care?), our God is telling us to watch ourselves. Be careful. ***"Watch yourselves or else your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, and that day may come on you suddenly. For it will come like a trap on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth."*** That picture is like a bird snare; ***"come like a trap."*** The bird doesn't see it until it's too late. So He is saying to watch yourself so you aren't caught like a bird in the snare. Always be prepared to meet Christ because when He comes, He

is going to come with judgment on those who, it doesn't matter if you used to know Him, if you aren't connected to Him when He comes, you're going to spend eternity in hell. That's His warning to you.

If you read this whole chapter of [Luke 21](#), there are some terrifying things in there that kind of make you shudder. It sounds like a really frightening movie some of these signs and some of these terrors that people are going to go through, and how family member will betray family member, and the love of most will grow cold. Do you ever think about that? The love of most will grow cold. That's one of the signs He mentions in other parts of the Gospel. That is kind of closer to home, isn't it? Love growing cold in our country. We can't express any disagreement without saying we have to hate the person that doesn't think and do exactly like we do in our country anymore. We don't seem to be able to love anyone that doesn't think exactly as we think.

Imagine if Christ treated us that way. If He only loved those who had the mind of Christ and lived the mind of Christ, imagine if He was that kind of loving; that you only love those who thought like you and did what you do and all those kinds of things. I guess He'd be the only one in heaven, wouldn't He? There aren't any of us that do that. We're all sinners who should be separated from God, but His love was this—while we were still sinners, He lived in our place and died in our place. While we were still sinners, He sent the Spirit into our hearts. While we are still sinners (even though He has made us His saints), He continually reaches out to us day after day through the Word and through the Sacrament so that we might know the depth of His love for us.

We at times think *yeah, I know Jesus loves me. I learned that song as a kid. Tell me something new.* We don't always marvel at this incredible truth that our God loves us. You heard Paul say it to the Thessalonians. He wants them to know God's love better so that they can love other people better.

Think about that for a minute. While the love of many grow cold as the world gets closer and closer to an end, if God's people keep loving those even that hate them, are different than them, that attack them, won't that shine like the brightness of the stars in a darkened age? Isn't that exactly what God has called us to do? And we get bored at that comment. We get bored at that comment and look at our watch and think *isn't that guy ever going to shut up instead of just telling me to love like God loves me? I have other things I have to do. I have places to be.* And yet He still loves us. I don't get it, but He does.

So He desperately reaches out to us and says the end is coming and you better be ready. He tells us parables. He gives us signs to look for. He points us to all of this. Then He tells us that we will escape all those things that are going to happen and that we'll be able to stand before the Son of Man. Then when the world is running around in terror, frightened because they realize it's the end, we'll be able to stand and lift up our

heads; lift them up in joy knowing that our God, who loves us, has come back. Our God, who loves us, has come to give us our final redemption.

You and I should not be able to lift up our heads to our God. We have failed Him so often and we will continue to do so. Yet His love covers every one of our failures. His love is there for us. And it is for those who aren't here who do not appear to be watching themselves. It is there for those whose hearts are weighed down with ***carousing, drunkenness, and the worries of this life***. The only thing that God has as a plan so that they won't have the end of the world come on them like a trap or like a bird's snare is that you and I love them and share the love of Christ with them. That's it. That's His plan.

He leaves us in this world so that we can be the beacons of His Gospel light and He tells us at times it's going to be hard. He tells us at times we are going to be rejected. He tells us at times God's people are going to be incredibly indifferent to the love of God in Christ. And He tells us not to let it weigh us down. Keep sharing that love. Keep growing in that love. Keep living in that love. And keep loving those who don't love you back. That is what our God has called us to do. The fact that when He returns we don't have to be afraid is all the motivation that we need to live in that love every day of our lives. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.