

“What’s Your Reaction?”—Luke 21:34-36

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What’s Your Reaction?”, is Luke 21:34-36 → Jesus says: *Watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

You wake up in the middle of the night to a sound similar to a freight train, so loud it shakes your house. As fear immediately grips you, your family’s safety comes to the forefront of your reaction. Rushing through the house you grab everyone from their beds and lead them to the lowest part of the house and huddle them together in an effort to be safe. As the sound grows louder you experience your house being ripped from its foundation with debris flying everywhere. Helpless you simply wait, praying that it will pass and you will emerge safe and sound. Is it a tornado? Is it the end of the world? It is definitely a re-defining moment in your life as you emerge from the debris.

What is your reaction to sudden disaster infiltrating your life in a split second? Actually, this is a difficult question to answer since you really don't know until it happens and you hope it never will! Along with a gamut of feelings such as survival, fear, grief, helplessness and even despair, you may wonder where you go from here as your world is turned upside down. Even if you feel prepared for possession disasters with property insurance, health challenges with medical insurance, accidents with car insurance, responsibility suits with liability insurance and . . . yes . . . death with life insurance, there is no avoiding the unexpected. This is especially true of the 2nd Coming of Jesus with the destruction of this earth in its present form.

In Jesus' discussion with His disciples about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD He also included teaching about His 2nd Coming and it's accompanying catastrophes. In Luke 21:26 He described one reaction to these events: *People fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.* No amount of insurance will deliver from experiencing this event because on that Day when you see *the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory* (cf. Luke 21:27), *the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved.* (cf. 2 Peter 3:10)

What's your reaction to such information concerning the signs of Christ's 2nd Coming? Many react as they watch the current events, wondering if the

world is “going to hell in a handbasket.” Unfortunately news of *nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, great earthquakes . . . famines and pestilences* (cf. Luke 21:10-11) drives many to a life of gloom and doom leading to despair and hopelessness.

The reaction of many others is a different form of darkness with no concern about these signs of Christ’s 2nd Coming at all. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describes it as a self-absorbed life: *In the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.* Sound like a time period of which you are familiar? It hits rather close to home!

What’s your reaction? According to verse 34 of our text Jesus tells you to *watch yourselves* as you watch for His 2nd Coming *lest . . . that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.* We are to be discerning in the midst of the temptations which confront us everyday, including those activities which appear to be proper and good. Having *hearts . . . weighed down with dissipation* and the *cares of this life* refers to placing such a strong focus on taking care of the affairs of this life that we neglect the affairs of our eternal

life. This is easy to do since we have to live life with all its responsibilities required of us.

However, consider the choices you actually make in life. Much of that which consumes your focus and attention is in place because you choose those activities! The danger is in neglecting your relationship with Jesus Christ through His Word and sacraments **daily** while engrossed in *cares of this life*. Even though it is commendable to be conscientious about the *cares of this life* it is also spiritually dangerous to choose to neglect your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in it all! Sadly, so many don't think they are making such a choice. That Day will come upon them *suddenly* and actually *trap* them in subtle unbelief and spiritual distraction. This is why Jesus commands you in Matthew 26:41 → *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Throughout Scriptures we are called upon to be "sober-minded." This is the concept in Jesus' warning about *your hearts* being *weighed down with . . . drunkenness*. A drunk person can become less guarded and more arrogant. As the senses are numbed or altered he makes choices which are not beneficial and even downright stupid. Not only can those choices endanger his own life, they will usually affect the lives of those around in an adverse manner. Such arrogance in idolatry is also detrimental to a person's eternal

salvation because *pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*. (cf. Proverbs 16:18) Arrogance is what hinders people from experiencing the forgiveness of sin in Jesus because it stops confession of sins in repentance.

So . . . how do you react properly so that *you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man*. (Verse 36) It only happens as you respond to God's Word by repenting of your sins and trusting in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. It is in this faith, trusting completely in Jesus alone, that you *have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place*.

Here's how 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says this escape will happen: Jesus *will descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*. Those who trust in Christ alone for salvation will be delivered in the bodily resurrection to enjoy eternal life in God's presence in heaven, creation restored in Christ's righteousness! 2 Peter 3:13 says: *But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells!*

Instead of reacting to the signs of Christ's 2nd Coming which are evident all around you, the Holy Spirit is drawing you to respond in faith to the One Who is Lord of all those signs—Jesus. As you place your faith totally in the Person

and Work of Jesus, you will be prepared to meet that day with joy and anticipation! You will not have to shrink back in fear. Instead you will be able to do as Jesus instructs in Luke 21:28 → *Straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!* It is a response of both humility and confidence in the presence of Jesus which welcomes and exalts Him as the Lord of our history which finds its goal **in Him!**

Jesus spoke these words to produce fear in people **now** so that they could be confident **then**. The message of Peter from Acts 3:19-20 is just as applicable to us today as it was to the people of his day: *Repent . . . and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you.* As you experience this *refreshing* with the burden of sin lifted today you will also experience this *refreshing* with the restoration of all things on the Last Day! Looking forward to Christ's return in faith at any moment you will be able to stand on the Last Day to present to Him a life which is governed by **His** grace and **His** Lordship today by His Holy Spirit's power! Amen.

We confess with Job: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!* (cf. Job 19:25-27 NIV) Amen.