

## Luke 21:5-36 – Pentecost 23 – By Your Endurance – November 16, 2025

+In Nomine Iesu+

Today is our Stewardship Sunday. In a few minutes we will bring forward our offerings and pledges for 2026 giving. Some might prefer pastors never talk about money. It might seem self-serving. Admittedly—I know a few pastors who are slick salesmen. They even make grand promises of financial blessings for all who give. That is not me.

But Jesus did talk about money. Our Gospel reading comes from Luke 21. And that is the topic leading up to our reading. Here, Jesus goes from talking about a poor widow's sacrificial gift—to the end of the world. And I think these topics are tied together intentionally.

Giving to the local church means that we want to see faithful Word and Sacrament ministry—the substance of His kingdom—to continue among us. And of course, the church has practical expenses. We try and keep our finances open and honest. All our numbers are available at Voters' Assembly.

But more than anything, I want us to see our giving as worship. It is a response to the gifts of God in Christ Jesus. And it reveals the condition of our hearts before God. Your giving is a helpful barometer of your spiritual health. Don't compare your giving to what others give. Instead, compare your giving to what God has given you. So even as you bring your cards forward today—let this be a moment for self-reflection.

And this is why the Scriptures talk about giving as a primary concern. As your income comes to you, it is a gift of God. He supplies for you. And this is a fundamental confession. We tend to think that we work for our money—so it is ours. But that's not a biblical way of looking at things. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul asked the brash and wealthy Corinthians, "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"

You cannot serve God and money. One must always have priority. And so, in giving to Him first, we recognize that all things belong to God. He is the one who allows our work to prosper. And then we prioritize the kingdom of God in our giving—before we decide what we will spend on cars and boats and entertainment and eating out. God calls us to first-fruits giving because He teaches us to recognize His provision. And this is actually for our good. God has no needs. And nothing will prevail against His purposes.

So, what we do with our money is a spiritual issue. What we do with *our lives* is a spiritual issue. And in that broader framework of stewardship, I would like to give our attention to the last few verses of our Gospel reading today. We will let this interaction of money and the return of Christ grab our attention. Most of Luke 21 is his version of Jesus' Olivet Discourse. It is tucked in here at the end of the church year because it is apocalyptic and prophetic.

Here, Jesus talks about the end of the Jewish age—the persecution of the church—the crucifixion—the destruction of the temple. The nation is headed for hard times. Their rejection of Jesus will be painful and costly.

But mixed in with this *end of the world* kind of event—we see hints of the end of the world—the signs of the times—the return of Christ—even judgment day. The Son of

Man comes in the clouds with power and great glory. A pattern of events emerges in the first century that is associated with the return of the Son of Man at the end of time.

Prophets often spoke about a short-term fulfillment and a long-term fulfillment at the same time—in the same prophecy. And it is because the events are similar. And here, Jesus treats many themes that connect to the Old Testament hope for a coming Day of the Lord.

And because this is all so serious—because our spiritual lives are so serious—Jesus tells us to be careful. We are to watch ourselves—as our text reads. And throughout, Jesus gives us three specific concerns. He tells us, “But 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.”

Here we find that Jesus wants us to be good stewards of ourselves and of our times. He says, “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Remember, that these first century followers of Jesus will see many of these signs of the times firsthand. But we have these kinds of signs too—wars, natural disasters, persecution, apostasy. And so, Jesus calls us to take the time we have been given seriously.

And He tells us these things so that the Day of the Lord doesn’t come upon us as a trap. And, this means that the Day of the Lord can come upon us as a trap. And that means the Day would become a day of judgment for us rather than deliverance.

I think we often assume in our affirming culture that the Day of the Lord is a blessing for everybody. As if everyone goes to a better place at His return—as if everyone meets that day with what God requires. But this is just not how Jesus speaks of it. It can be a day of deliverance or it can be a day of wrath—depending on your spiritual condition—whether you endure in Christ. In our reading, Jesus says, “By your endurance you will gain your lives.”

And listen to how John describes that day in Revelation 1, “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”

When the Lord does come back, everyone will be faced with the reality of His return and His powerful presence. Some will be ready for it. Others will not. And so, Jesus calls His disciples to prepare—to be watchful—to live as if Jesus is coming soon.

And this preparedness spreads out into all of life. The verb form Jesus uses as He tells us to “watch yourselves” is a present imperative. And this is a command that suggests our attentiveness must be ongoing. The return of Christ should have our constant attention.

And the opposite of watchfulness includes the three things I mentioned earlier, dissipation, drunkenness, and the cares of this life. Now, I will not give you a huge discourse on each temptation that Jesus lists here. Clearly such practices and thinking detract from our faith and attentiveness to the rule and reign of God.

This list reminds me of Jesus’ Parable of the Soils. As Jesus explains the meaning, He says this about the seed of the Gospel that gets scattered among the thorns. “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”

It is hard to read this. But it is clear enough. Lots of people hear the Word. But a response is necessary. Repentance is necessary. We are giving too much of our time and attention and money to things that don't matter. We are distracted from the eternal—as we talked about last week. And that is not the kind of life that leads to eternal life.

Now, we started the day by talking about tithing to the local church. And I do think the tithe is a good benchmark for us. It reveals something about our faith. But even here, there is potential problem. Yes, let's give ten percent to the local church. But we aren't then free to spend the rest however we see fit. We are still stewards of the other ninety percent too. Our faith should shape our use of all our resources. We should know what the Bible says about money.

I like the way Jesus says it in Luke 6, “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

You can see that this is about so much more than money. We should see all of life—our time, schedules, morality, attention, passion, relationships—as stewards. Maybe we should talk about tithing our time back to God—to read, study, worship, pray, memorize, meditate, and serve. Now that would entail 17 hours each week. And I bet that sounds like a lot. But why is that so unreasonable? You would still have 151 hours a week for everything else.

But even more, like with financial stewardship, the better approach is to see all of life as spiritual. Everything we do involves seeking the kingdom of God—all of Christ for all of life. The true Christian life isn't just this Sunday thing—once a week. This is a good discipline—to be in church every week. In fact, it is something we need. But He plans to redeem all of life. And we should hold nothing back.

Jesus' Olivet Discourse serves to reassure us that He is advancing His plan. Resistance to Christ doesn't stop His intentions in the world—it just puts us on the wrong side of them. And the details remind us about how serious He is about sin and the need for forgiveness.

The fall of Jerusalem was painful. But that was nothing compared to Christ's final return—for those who are opposed to His purposes. And it is this feature that gives this text its theological power. Our culture tends to minimize the authority of God to punish unrighteousness. Yet that theme is one of the more important notes raised here.

Jesus testified to a coming judgment for His opponents—but also a future vindication of His saints. His life and death are much more than a moral legacy. He will return to judge—and that judgment is serious business. And these ideas cause us to wonder where we stand before God. But they also invite faith. Christ's followers need to have a resolve to endure in the faith. We need a resolve that grows in the face of the assurance that God will indeed do what He has promised. He will vindicate His children. And so, we preserve—we continue to walk in trust—and in faithfulness—to the end.

We continue to hope in things we cannot see. We set our minds on things above. Jesus is the author and defender of our faith. And He promises that one day He will return for His people. And His people long for His return—with lives firmly grounded in the

kingdom of heaven. It is as Paul says in 2 Timothy 4, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

God has provided—in Jesus Christ—the means whereby we can gain forgiveness—even for our lack of attentiveness to the things of God. He is patient with us. I like the way Peter says it in 2 Peter 3, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” And then he says, “Be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure.”

But Peter offers us one more thought—in this same chapter. And I think it is a good place to stop on a sermon dealing with such a text, “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved—meaning all the cares of this life and even all creation—what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” May we have this mind among ourselves. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*+Soli Deo Gloria+*