

Sunday 11/17/19

Luke 21: 5-19

I was born on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1955. The Korean Conflict had ended a few years prior. My Father and most of my Uncles had either served in WWII or the Korean conflict. The US involvement in Viet Nam started in 1955 and went until 1975. During that time the US was part of the Lebanon Crisis 1965, Grenada 1983, Beirut, 1985, Panama, 1989, Somalia, 1993, Haiti 1994-95, Yugoslavia the 1990's. And the war against terrorist from 2001 until today which, would be Afghanistan, Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya. This is just a brief list and I am sure that there are other conflicts and wars that I am missing.

And next my list of natural disaster, famine and pestilence would be from this year alone. Major flooding in the heartland throughout Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa.

Wildfires in California and her sister state Russia, the Amazon and Australia which will most likely burn four times as many acres as the Amazon or close to four million acres. Massive flooding in Venice which is destroying historical and irreplaceable works of art. The UK facing higher food prices because of ruined crops from so much rain in the UK. And some of the strongest storms recorded in both the Pacific and the Atlantic during this year's hurricane and typhoon season. And though not totally unusual way too much snow way too early in Iowa City. And get your flu shot because there is evidence that it may be a stronger than normal flu season.

This next list is a bit more difficult to name exactly.

Kanye Christian West, Kim Kardashian's husband. Has he really found the spirit of Christ with Joel Osteen or are

both of their the ratings down on their TV show's and they need something to boost them back up? Paula White, President Trumps in house Spiritual adviser. Is it truly Holy Ground everywhere she steps even in the White house or is she really running a Ponzi scheme as some are recently claiming? And if you only speak in tongues does that make it difficult to answer questions in a hearing? And how many private jets as a minister do you need to be able to hear the voice of God clearly?

As a nation we are already splitting families and friends and children at our Southern borders. Or, in our own community. When a brilliant follower of Christ having been constantly attacked by the tradition she holds dear because she is part of loving gay relationship to the point that she is leaving or taking a leave of absence. She hears God's voice more clearly then any preacher in their

own private jet. If you get a chance to read Anna Blaedel's letter to her denomination I would highly recommend it.

So, what is my point of these list? As preachers when we get a Gospel that is so gloomy and depressing and seems so not Christian or Jesus like...we cringe. And as I read today's gospel I was cringing big time. Maybe I should look at one of the other readings to preach on today? Especially a day in which we joyfully welcome new members into our midst here at New Song.

But then I just started to think of the reality of the so-called real world that I live in. My father talked little of his war experience but as a very impressionable youth the thought of gas chambers and the atrocities of war terrified me. And my first memorable conflict was the

Cuban missile crisis. Could Iowa farmers survive a nuclear attack? My father understood how quickly a society would collapse when it became hungry and how quickly people would head to the farms in search of food.

So, today's Gospel though uncomfortable should not make any of us cringe or stay away from it. It is the world we live in every day and most likely we have lived in every day of our lives. The complexity, to me, is we can understand how awful war is, how awful false prophets maybe, how awful we are to our fellow humans. We have faced awful diseases such as TB, Polio and HIV Aids in our lifetimes. And we have all been touched by someone who has suffered from a disease but how do we respond to these issues if it doesn't really affect our everyday lives? I personally can be a master of wanting

to ignore the conflict around me or don't get involved if it doesn't involve me. Out of sight out of mind.

So, with all these things that point to the end times per this Gospel why aren't we panicked? Why aren't our pews full of people preparing the way to meet their Lord? Have wars gone on for so long that like gun violence in schools we have become desensitized to them? Many of my most Hawkish friends, I believe, think that war would be like that of a Hollywood set. Nothing of how gruesome it is. There is a reason for PTSD and a higher than normal suicide rate amongst Vets. There is a reason that my Father and my Uncles hardly ever spoke of their war experiences. And one of my favorite quotes by Jose Narosky, "In war, there are no unwounded soldier's."

As soon as the polio vaccine was available my mother wasted no time in making sure her kids got it. Has the next generation who don't believe in vaccinating forgotten how deadly some of the childhood disease can be? Sorry if you are an anti-vaxxer, my mother was not.

And there are still those that think the Holocaust was a fake while genocide still happens around the globe today.

And can you imagine what the Pharisees and the Sadducee and the Romans may have been able to do if they could have gone on Tweeter tirades in Jesus day? And there is nothing worse when you are complaining about a friend, or a family member in an email and you hit send before you double check and forget to uncheck that person you are complaining about. We have all done it and we have most likely all received one.

And my one great sadness is how do I talk about my relationship with God, my relationship with the New Song community. Why my Faith journey is so important to me and how I have seen spirit walk thru my life. Without starting to sound like a TV evangelist and automatically turning off the friends who I feel would enjoy the same experience. My own feeling, but I feel hyped up evangelism has ruined it for me one of God's odds and ends, to share my faith journey and my beliefs in God. As soon as I mention God most of my friends become suspicious. I get the answer, "I am spiritual but not religious," but it saddens me that you can not be both because of what I feel is the false witnessing of others. Of course, some day when I have my life review on the others side. I will hopefully find the answer to who was right and who was wrong.

Even I am beginning to wonder how close the end times maybe.

But guess what? We all will have an end time. We all have a use by date. Hopefully it will be easier than the apocalyptic account of today's sermon. And hopefully it will be a life well lived. And hopefully we will have done our best to deal with the reality of the life on this planet called Earth and in our own small way leave it a bit better for the next generation. For there are experiences we can only have while in this body with this soul on this planet to praise God. From knowing love and joy, to loss and sadness. To knowing good health and dealing with health issues with the most grace and perseverance that you can when they arise. From being one to cause hurts to being one to ask for forgiveness when you have hurt

someone. To being the one to forgive when someone has hurt us. To being the voice of justice when we see a fellow child of God being treated unjustly. For living on this earthly plane can be as gruesome as war but as beautiful as an Iowa sunset. It is in remembering that even at the worst it is God that we belong to and we are here, on this planet to celebrate the gift of being here for Him.

And guess what? Even in this cringe worthy gospel there is a blessing beyond compare. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict...You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.

In writing my sermons I rely totally on being given the words and the wisdom. Not that I consider this congregation my opponents. My opponents would be my self-doubt in that I have any wisdom to share. But in my life faced with any and all difficulties I always attempt to hear the words and the wisdom of God first. To move aside and let not the voices of this life but Gods voice from the next life guide me. I fear some day I may not hear them, and I will be void of a sermon on a day I am to preach. But since January 25, 1955 as my understanding of God and spirit has grown and continues to grow the Holy spirit has never let me down. I have had to say “oh really” on a couple of occasions when what I heard wasn’t what I wanted to hear. And as I type this I fear I sound like a TV evangelist. But guess what...Spirit has always been right.

And we are living, from my almost 65-year historical perspective in some of the oddest and most cringe worthy times ever. But today's Gospel gives me hope that I will be able to see myself through. Not to rely on preparing my own defense in advance. But by allowing myself to be open to hear the words and wisdom of God to help me see my way through to better days with my Savior in the life after this.

To those of you who are becoming members of New Song. Welcome, I look forward to learning your faith journey and the words and wisdom you can share with us. And how we can be there for you in your life both good times and bad times on this planet called Earth. And through the gift of this community called New Song and in the final words of today's Gospel may we find the endurance so we will gain our souls.

And all of God's children say, "Amen"