

“Opportunity to Testify”

Scripture: Luke 21: 5-19

I have come to realize more and more that God has a sense of humor. Just when I think I have planned for anything and that I have a handle on certain things, God throws me for a loop and I watch as my plans, my preparations, my sense of control go completely out the window, especially this week.

I shared with the congregation at our meeting a few weeks ago about where we were in the adoption process and someone asked “What’s the plan if the birth mom goes early”. And I jokingly said, “I’ll have a back-up plan for my back-up plan.”

Well, apparently God took me serious and this week, I’ve been working on a back up plan for my back up plan for my back up plan. My phone rang on Thursday morning and it was our adoption coordinator with the news that our birth mom may deliver early. I wasn’t real surprise. Something has been telling me all along this was going to happen so I thought-what’s new. Don’t worry. We’re prepared. We’ve got our bases covered. We ready for anything that comes our way. We’ve planned. We’ve prepared. We’ve made hotel reservations that are refundable.

And then here came the loop: Our adoption coordinator continued by saying, “Right now the baby is breech and since the birth mom is so petite, the doctors are worried that there is no room for the baby to turn around in the right position. Okay, not so bad. We can handle this...

Until one more loop: “On Monday, November 15th, the birth mom will be at 35 weeks and the doctors want to wait until 36 weeks before they talk about delivering the baby. And as you may know, that means 36 weeks is the week of Thanksgiving...

So one more loop: “Mike and you need to keep your phones with you all the time from now on because you might get a call soon that the baby is coming.”

I think you could have picked my jaw up off the ground. I hadn’t planned on this. I hadn’t prepared for this. Everything that I had prepared for doesn’t quite work anymore!

So now, Mike and I find ourselves in this “soon, yet not yet” scenario where plans and preparations just don’t work. We can talk about situations and what ifs...but how do we really prepare and plan for this coming event? And we have come to realize that we can’t really plan or prepare. Sure we can do a few things

but in the end, we have no control. It is what it is and God is in control. And that is the true lesson of faith!

That is what our Scripture is about today. Jesus is back at the Temple, teaching. And someone makes the comment about how beautiful the Temple is and aren't we lucky that we have this beautiful building to remind us about God. The Temple is going to last forever as our testimony to God."

And then Jesus says, "Well, not really. Nothing lasts forever. Not even this Temple that was built as a testimony to God. Nothing lasts forever. The world as you know will come to an end. I am not sure when or where. Only God knows that. Just know that nothing lasts forever.

And you can see these light bulbs go off in everyone's head. The world is going to come to an end. When? What can we do to prepare? We need to start collecting canned items so that we can make it through the end of the world. We need to make a checklist of "survival items". We need to make sure that we have lots of batteries put away.

And so they ask: Alright, Jesus, you say that the world is coming to an end. When? How will we know? What can we do to prepare? What signs will let us know that this is coming?

And Jesus talks about wars. Jesus talks about famines. Jesus talks about earthquakes.

And you can see the crowd starting to think: Well, we had a war last year. And right now, we aren't exactly in a famine situation but it could get that way... We need to prepare. Start collecting stuff so that we are protected and prepared for whatever comes our way. That is the only way we are going to be safe is if we are proactive and take control.

And Jesus keeps talking: Guess what? Before any of this happens, you will be arrested. You will be tried. And some of you may be put to death. And there is nothing you can do to prepare. There is nothing you can do to protect yourself. At that moment, all these items that you accumulated won't help you one bit. All those plans that you made won't help you. All those preparations that you made won't work. Family will turn against. Friends will turn against you. You will be hated because of my name. All of your most prized possessions will fade away and you will be left with no material items. You will be stripped bare of all the things that give you security!

But this is good news!! Because in reality the security that our plans and preparations bring is a false sense of security. That type of security is not real! The only true security is trusting that God will be with us on this journey. In that

moment when we lose everything that you hold dear, when we let go of our false sense of security, and our best laid plans fall apart, we have been given an opportunity to testify to what God really has done for us in our lives. we have been given the opportunity to truly live. In that moment, we truly begin to turn our lives over to God. We experience new life because we trust in God's grace to sustain us, trust in God's love to keep us from harm, trust in God's presence to give us hope to endure.

What Jesus is saying today and reminding us once again that as people of faith: Don't put our trust in items to keep you safe. Don't put our trust in being prepared for the end. Put our trust in God who will always keep us safe. Put our trust in God who will always sustain us and give us hope for the journey. Put our trust in God.

We will gain so much more when we put our trust in God and live out our calling as people of faith. Proclaiming the Good News of God, knowing that we are cared for, that we are safe in God's presence, that we are provided for as one of God's own children.

Jesus asks the crowd that day to risk losing all and to gain their souls. And he is asking us the same thing today.

And it takes us by surprise. These are not words that we want to hear. We don't want to lose it all. We like to have our stuff around. We like to prepare for the worst. We like to prepare for upcoming disasters. We like to collect. We like to protect ourselves by preparing for whatever comes our way. We like back up plans for our back up plans for our back up plans. It helps us feel in control in a world that is filled with chaos. We want to build buildings that will last forever and keep us safe. We want to know that we will never want for anything. It is scary to think that we could go without. We want to be proactive in our protection and our security.

And Jesus tells us that all of our efforts will not be worth anything when the end comes. Our buildings will fall away and crumble. Our safe environments will be chipped away because we will be persecuted because we proclaim Jesus' name. We will be left seemingly defenseless. No family. No friends. No things to protect us. No stuff to help us prepare for the end. No plans or preparations to prepare us for what comes next.

The end will happen regardless of what we do, of what we have. We will have to risk losing it all.

And in that moment, we will be stripped bare of all the things that we think we need to survive and realize that we are left with just one thing: God's grace to give

us hope. God's love to sustain us. God's presence to strengthen us. We will be left with God.

And it is that moment we have the opportunity to testify and to begin to live our lives as people of faith to the fullest. We learn that we must place our hope and our trust in God's grace and love and we will be sustained. And we will endure.

In that moment, we realize that as Christians we proclaim only God is everlasting and once we realize that we can start living in this chaotic world, trusting in God's word to keep us safe. The only thing that is guaranteed for us as Christians is God's love and God's continued care! And that is the message that we are called to proclaim!

And we realize that it is our calling to live our lives as people of faith, deepening our relationship with God grounded in an indestructible hope of grace that will sustain us in our chaotic and unpredictable world.

Yes our world will end one day. Yes, there will be wars and famines. Yes, there will be earthquakes. Our world will end one day. Yes, our best laid plans will fall away. But we cannot stop living our lives as people of faith. We cannot stop living out our calling as people of God just because we are trying to protect ourselves from the unknown. We cannot stop doing ministry here on earth just because it is

all come to an end. We don't know when the world is coming to an end. that shouldn't stop us from sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sharing the hospitality of God's welcome to all that we meet.

We have been given a job to do and that is to proclaim God's grace to all of God's children and tell them about God's continued care.

God will be there for us always. God will sustain us. God will share God's grace with us always.

God will always be there for us. May we always have the strength to endure towards the end and embrace our opportunities to testify of God's everlasting care.

Amen.