

How Does the Creature Say....?

Open Prairie, UCC

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Luke 21:25-36

Then Jesus told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kin(g)dom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. **"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life,** and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Humanity."

Welcome to Advent! More apocalyptic literature...it's everywhere.

The sum total is this... **the time is now!** In this parable about the fig tree time disappears, the parable jumps from budding to summer harvest. "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near." Trees don't sprout leaves in the summer, when do they sprout leaves, in the spring. All of time, past and present, is collapsed into the **now**. The 'time' or in this case the 'kindom' is **now**. "Now is the age of the fig tree; there is no golden future, no apocalyptic future. In it's very ordinariness there is only this tree."¹ The tree, which represents the kindom of God, which is more than just near... it is **now!**

¹ Hear Then the Parable; A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus, Bernard Brandon Scott Fortress Press, pp.342

Last week I preached about the Mobius strip, about living the life you mean to live...not sometime down the road, but **now**. I told you that the notion of the end of times doesn't scare people like Paul Goble because he is, who he means to be- and he doesn't plan on being much different than who he is now, when his end of time comes. It's easier not to be afraid of the end when we are living the lives we mean to live, the lives God means for us to live.

It was a tough week at our house. Those who were in church last week, remember that my parents were here visiting and during that visit my mom got word that her brother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and given only a few days to live. My folks went home on Tuesday- on Friday morning I received a call from my mother that her brother had passed away just before dawn. My Mom and Dad had been with him in the hospital the day before his death. It was important that they made it to Southern California to be with him one last time. It was important for my mom to feel she had set everything right, she made every effort to secure right relationship with her baby brother Doug and his wife Jenny. Having done so, when the time came, she was ready to let him go.

I know many of you have been in moments just like that one...and I hate to break it to you, but if you haven't been yet, you probably will be at some point... in a moment where every decision matters. And we have to make those decisions in an instant sometimes don't we? What will it take to secure right relationship in **this moment**... especially when someone is dying... the answers rarely come easily.

There are always dynamics and personalities that make it hard to know what is the right thing to do.

While my parents were here with Katie and I, we talked about this situation quiet a bit, I kept saying to my Mom, “You know Mom, I know it is hard to go-his wife is being difficult his child is being difficult, but I have never met a person who regretted being there at the last moments of a loved one’s life, I have only met people who were sorry they weren’t there.” Still, the decision to go and be with her brother did not come easily to her. When they left from their visit with us, they went home for a day- my mother ran a board meeting for the charity she serves, like daughter like mother. By the end of the meeting she was pretty broken up...she said she had asked God for a sign, she just didn’t know what to do... and then the phone rang... the fella on the other end of the phone, ‘Bob the builder’ they call him, he listened to her and told her he thought she needed to go be with her brother. Was it a sign from God? I don’t know, I had been telling her that for a week, but she was finally able to hear it when he said it. “The time is now!” he said, and then she knew what to do.

Most of you know by now that our beloved cats Diesel and Daisy went missing for a week and were found yesterday morning. They are fine and happy to be home, but not knowing where they were was excruciating. In a moment of levity Katie said, “maybe the rapture came and took ‘em, and we were the ones who got left behind.”

We usually don't see the end coming do we? We wake up one morning and the people or the creatures we love are right there with us at the end of the day...who knows?

The time is now. Would you do anything differently if you knew this was your last day? Is there someone you would call, something you've been meaning to say or do to bring about right relationship? Scripture says **the time is now.** I hope there is a tomorrow, I hope there are lots and lots of tomorrows, but "The days are surely coming says the Lord"...**when do we live the Gospel we profess?** My Professor at school gave an example last week he said, "I know how to swim. I am actually a good swimmer, but I don't swim often." We may know the Gospel, but how often is it useful to us? Under what circumstances does it become relevant? Is it when we feel threatened...or scared...is it when the end is near... or is it **now?**

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life.../ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place..."

I don't think we can escape the hard things that happen in this life, but if the dissipation and worries are what drags us down and threatens to sink us, then perhaps the Good News this morning is simply that being alert and praying at all times will give us the strength we need to endure the hardships of this life. If the option is to sink or swim, I think it's a good time to practice swimming don't you?

Amen