

First Sunday of Advent

IT'S JESUS, NOT JUST EVENTS

Luke 21:25-36

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Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

25“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. 28Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36Be 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 Man.”

DIAGNOSIS: Hearts Are Hung on Events with Fear

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Events Endanger Life*

Who in the text has a problem? People have the problem of “distress among the nations” who are “confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves,” and the “powers of heaven are shaken.” Safety is threatened. The safety in which we do the business of providing the items needed to live on—food, shelter, clothing; without them safety will not happen. There will be disaster caused by events of nature—tornados tearing up a town, a tsunami, a hurricane, mudslides, drought, and no food. People need the powers of heavens to remain firm so that their lives are not threatened. People depend on those things to keep them alive.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Dangers Demand Distress*

Is it worse than that, worse than the powers of the heavens being shaken? Yes, because people’s hearts fear the heavens being shaken. They fear that something is coming upon the world and will ruin their lives. Whatever that event or power that is shaking things up has become their god, the god they hang their heart on with fear. People will faint with fear. People are full of foreboding. They are hanging their hearts on lots of fearful events. Not just the event, but that the events will take away their ability to keep themselves alive.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *It’s God, Not Just Events and Chaos*

Can it get any worse than fearing what is threatening their lives? Yes, it gets even worse. All that roaring of the seas and waves, all that shaking of the powers of the heavens is happening because the “TRUE God,” the kingdom of God, is near. The coming of God means that all we have now will pass away. To

lose all we have and own and love will weigh us down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life. Our hearts' fear of what is happening will make us feel that life is not worth living. Indeed, to God, we do not deserve life. No wonder we are weighed down and bent over, using the morphine of entertainment to take away our pain.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus Is Hung on a Cross for Us

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *It's Jesus, Not Just Events and Chaos*

Since we are diagnosed with not deserving life, that necessitates the only cure we know: namely, Jesus. Jesus is coming with redemption. That we know because he came before as a man who became weighed down, bent over with the weight of our not deserving life. Thus, Jesus died on a cross, dying our death. Then the powers of heaven were shaken and the earth shook and Jesus was raised from the dead! Jesus has dealt with judgment and death and overcome them, ended them. So when he comes, he does not come to judge or "to deal with sin," "but he comes to save those who are waiting for him" (Heb. 9:24). Jesus is our life, and is the one who gives us life even when the heavens are shaken, the seas and waves roar, and we die. Health is not our life. What we own is not our life. The power to keep what we have is not our life. Jesus is drawing near to redeem us from all that we fear.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Spirit Inspires Faith in Jesus*

This news of Jesus is even better. By Jesus' death and rising for us, the Spirit gives us faith in Jesus, so that we count on him instead of counting (fearing) the heavens being shaken, the economy not working well, or our health disturbed by a cancer. The Spirit uses the gift of Jesus for us to get us to stand up, instead of being weighed down under our despair of how events

are treating us. Even in death we now live in Jesus. Even when the powers of our lives—health, economy, family—are shaken, disturbed, fail, we stand trusting Jesus to save us and to raise us from death.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *We Are Strengthened to Stand and Serve*

How does such a healed person, a person trusting Jesus, live and act in a world in which the seas and waves roar and the powers of heaven are shaken? Instead of being bowed down with despair, they, by their faith in Jesus, stand upright in the midst of trouble, their heart trusting Jesus to keep their life in him, even if their life is not kept safe with food and shelter. People trusting Jesus remain alert, ready any day to serve those who still fear the troubles in their lives. They keep their faith in Jesus by praying for the strength that comes from faith in Jesus, for the strength of the Spirit that enables them to deal with their situation and to help their neighbor with rides to their cancer treatments, to help their neighbor prepare their house for a storm, or to daily bring them food to eat, or calmly go to work despite of all that is happening. They pray for neighbors to have hope and peace in the midst of the storms and waves of sickness and troubles in the family. Fear, distress, and confusion are replaced with faith working in love for others.