

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

(Luke 21:5-19)

Intro: Ann Landers liked to say:
-“Be careful what you ask for.”
-“You might get it.”

In both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds we confess:
-Jesus “will come again to judge the living and the dead.”
#Be careful what you ask for.
#You might get it.

When we introduced our new hymnal.
-Evangelical Lutheran Worship.
#Back in July.
-We invited people to suggest their favorite hymns.
#Number of people selected:
*Battle Hymn of the Republic.
+“Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory,” (ELW #890).
#We’re going to sing it this morning at the 11:00 service.
*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are
stored;
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
+Be careful what you ask for.
+You might get it.

These lines from the creeds and the Battle Hymn of the Republic.
-Focus on end-time things.
#Be careful what you ask for.
#You might get it.

Our lessons for today.
-Focus on end-time things.
#Be careful what you ask for.
#You might get it.

Throughout history there has been a certain fascination with the end of the world.
-How will it end?
-When will it end?

- I. These Are Not New Questions.
 - A. They Occur In Our Gospel Lesson For Today.
 1. People were standing around the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. Admiring the beautiful stones.
 - White stones.
 - Huge stones.
 - #20x8x12cubits.
 - *Jewish historian Josephus tells us.
 - #30' long x 12' high x 18' thick.
 - b. Commenting on the special gifts.
 - Dedications.
 - Memorials.
 - #Given by individuals.
 - *In honor or memory of someone.
 - #Much like our Abiding Gifts.
 2. Jesus said to them:
 - a. "All of this that you see"
 - Temple was a huge building.
 - #150' long.
 - #50' high.
 - Interior covered in gold.
 - b. "The days will come:"
 - "When all of this will come tumbling down."
 - "Not one stone will be left upon another."
 3. Those who heard Jesus' words thought the world was going to end.
 - a. They believed that God would never:
 - Abandon the Temple.
 - Allow it to be destroyed.
 - #This was God's house.
 - *This is where the presence of God was thought to reside.
 - #Unless the world were about to end.
 - *In which case they wouldn't need a Temple anymore.
 - b. They also believed that the coming of the Messiah.
 - Would be signaled by certain cosmic events.
 - #Supernatural.
 - #Earthshaking.
 - *Signs.
 - *Wonders.
 - c. They put 2+2 together.
 - Concluded that the destruction of the Temple.
 - #Could very well be that earth-shaking event.
 - *Signaled the end of the world.

4. So their questions were:
 - a. "When is this going to happen?"
 - b. "What will be the sign that this is about to take place?"
- B. Those Same Questions Get Asked Today.
1. When I was a jail chaplain.
 - a. I let the guys in my Bible classes pick the topics.
 - Scriptures they wanted to read.
 - Things they wanted to discuss.
 - b. One of their favorite topics was the Book of Revelation.
 - When I asked them why they were so interested in Revelation.
 - Their answers often went something like this:
 - # "We're in a lot of trouble."
 - # "We could get a lot of time for what we've done."
 - # "If we can just figure out when the world is supposed to end,"
 - * "Maybe that will happen."
 - * "Before we're done doing our time."
 2. When I was in college.
 - a. At the University of Wisconsin.
 - b. There was a man who thought the world was going to end.
 - Some would call him crazy.
 - Others would call him a visionary.
 - # He was later elected mayor of Madison.
 - c. He claimed he had received a message from God.
 - Revealing:
 - # When the world would end.
 - # Where he could board the flying saucer.
 - * God was sending.
 - + For him.
 - + For a limited number of other people.
 - d. This man was selling tickets for the flying saucer.
 - To those who didn't want to be left behind.
 - # How many tickets he sold, I don't remember.
 - e. Needless to say.
 - Time came and went.
 - Flying saucer did not appear.
 - World did not end.
 3. Hal Lindsey wrote a popular version of the end of the world some years ago.
 - a. The Late Great Planet Earth (1970).
 - b. Using Biblical passages.
 - In my opinion, inappropriately.

- To describe a cataclysmic battle on earth involving:
 - #Russia.
 - #Israel.
 - #Rome.
 - #United States.
 - #China.
 - *Which would bring the human race.
 - +To the brink of extinction.
 - *Before Jesus would intervene to save the world.
- His book is now 37 years old.
 - #More than one predicted date has come and gone.
 - *World has not ended.

4. When:
 - a. Space shuttle Challenger exploded.
 - b. World Trade Center was attacked on 9-11.
 - c. Calendar flipped to the year 2000.
 - There were those who took these to be signs.
 - #Signs of the end of the world

II. But Our Lessons For Today Warn Us Against Focusing Too Much On The End.

- A. There Is A Past That We Dare Not Forget.
 1. That past includes:
 - a. Cross.
 - b. Grave.
 - c. Open tomb.
 2. Jesus is the focus of our faith.
 - a. Not the obscure Biblical prophecies.
 - That some lift out of their context.
 - #Make the focus of their message.
 - *Scaring people into believing.
 - *Scaring people who are afraid of being left behind.
 - b. Our hope for the future is based upon what Jesus did on:
 - Good Friday.
 - Easter morning.
 3. Signs of God's new world.
 - a. Not:
 - Wars.
 - Earthquakes.
 - Revolutions.
 - #Those are signs of the old world.
 - b. But:
 - Empty cross.
 - Open tomb.

4. When Pam and I were in Branson a week ago.
 - a. One of the shows we went to.
 - Mannheim Steamroller Christmas.
 - #It's not a regular Branson show.
 - #Mannheim Steamroller is in Branson for 3-4 weeks.
 - *At The Palace.
 - *Playing their Christmas music.
 - +Which I just love.
 - As we were waiting for the concert to begin.
 - #I was reading the list of songs.
 - *That were to be included in the afternoon's performance.
 - #I commented to Pam.
 - *"They're not playing 'Hark! The Herald Trumpets'."
 - +Mannheim Steamroller's rendition of:
 - = "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."
 - *One of my favorite Mannheim Steamroller tunes.
 - b. Verse 3 of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."
 - One of my all-time favorites.
 - #I've thought about having it sung at my funeral.
 - *Even if my funeral is in the middle of summer.
 - #It's inspired by our First Reading.
 - *Malachi 4: 1-2a.
 - +Reminding us that the day of the Lords' coming.
 - =Not all about fire and destruction.
 - =But also about light and resurrection.
 - Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Sun of righteousness!
 Light and life to all he brings,
 Ris'n with healing in his wings.
 Mild he lays his glory by,
 Born that we no more may die,
 Born to raise each child of earth,
 Born to give us second birth.
 #Evangelical Lutheran Worship (#270).
5. Jesus warns:
 - a. "Watch out."
 - "Don't be fooled."
 - "Don't be led astray."
 - b. "There will be those who go around saying:"
 - "The end is near."
 - "I am he."
 - # "Don't go after them."
 - c. "There will be wars and insurrections."
 - "But they do not mean that the end is near."

- d. At the time Luke wrote his gospel.
 - There had been an insurrection.
 - #In 66 A.D.
 - #Zealots had rebelled against Roman rule.
 - *In Caesarea, Martima.
 - Romans responded with their Tenth Legion.
 - #Put down the uprising in Caesarea.
 - #Marched on Jerusalem.
 - *Laid siege to it.
 - *Crucified hundreds, if not thousands, of people.
 - *Destroyed the Temple.
 - +Torched it.
 - +Burned it to the ground.
 - =In 70 A.D.
 - Jesus' word was fulfilled.
 - #But that was not the end of the world.
- 6. If you are concerned about your future.
 - a. Don't get hung up on when the world will end.
 - b. Remember:
 - Sun of righteousness.
 - Risen with healing in his wings.

B. There Is A Present-Time That We Dare Not Ignore.

- 1. There were two epistles/letters written to the church in Thessalonica.
 - a. 1 Thessalonians.
 - b. 2 Thessalonians.
 - 1 Thessalonians says, among other things:
 - #"The Day of the Lord is coming."
 - #"Be ready."
 - #"It could be at any time."
 - *Some apparently took Paul's words too literally.
 - +They got lazy.
 - +They sat around on their hands.
 - =Waiting for the end to come.
 - Not working.
 - Not witnessing.
 - 2 Thessalonians offers a corrective.
 - #Our Second Reading.
 - #2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13.
 - *"Yes, the Lord is going to come again."
 - *"Yes, you need to be ready."
 - *"But in the meantime,"
 - + "Get off your butts."
 - + "Get to work."

2. While we wait for God's future.
 - a. There is work to be done.
 - There is daily bread to be earned.
 - There are Thanksgiving dinners to be delivered.
 - #To needy families.
 - There are Christmas gifts to be gathered.
 - #For children whose parents are incarcerated.
 - b. There is testimony to give.
 - There is Thanksgiving to be celebrated.
 - #On Wednesday evening at Bethany.
 - There is Handel's Messiah to be presented.
 - #At First Lutheran Church.
 - #In December.
 - There will be Advent soup suppers.
 - #Followed by a brief worship service.
 - *As we prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christmas.
 - Jesus says:
 - #"Sure, there will be disasters."
 - *Natural disasters.
 - *National disasters.
 - *Personal disasters.
 - #"But consider these as opportunities to testify."
 - *To the one who brings:
 - +Good out of evil.
 - +Life out of death.
 - +Resurrection out of crucifixion.
 - *To the one who is:
 - +Sun of righteousness.
 - +Risen with healing in his wings.

Concl: Here at this altar.

- Our Lord testifies.
 - #In bread and wine.
 - #In a way that no one can contradict:
 - *"You are loved."
 - *"You are forgiven."
 - *"You are redeemed."
 - *"Not a hair on your head will perish."

- Yes, be careful what you ask for.
 - #In Jesus, the Christ, you will get it.

