

## THE DECLARATION OF PROCLAMATION

### Luke 21:5-19

#### Intro

Our opening passage picks up some of the themes that we started talking about last week; mainly, how to be fearless instead of fearful. This fearlessness is articulated by Jesus in a very particular way (just so you don't miss it...make sure you're paying attention to verse 13!). This is what I would like you to hear: these proclamations that are to be made are not intended to be theological treatises that testify to the reality of the Trinity and how the Holy Spirit is able to manifest itself in our lives on a daily basis (and everyone breathes a sigh of relief!) ...you know, unless you are blessed by God with that sort of knowledge ('wait, so is the minister guy expecting me to know how to talk about that sort of stuff or not?' ...that's supposed to make you chuckle in case you are wondering!). But God is looking for us to proclaim. What does that sound like, what does that look like for you? The scripture reads this way.

### **Luke 21:5-19**

5 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, <sup>6</sup>'As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.'

7 They asked him, 'Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?' <sup>8</sup>And he said, 'Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and, "The time is near!" Do not go after them.

9 'When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.' <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup>there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

12 'But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. <sup>13</sup>This will give you an opportunity to testify. <sup>14</sup>So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; <sup>15</sup>for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup>You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup>You will be hated by all because of my name. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup>By your endurance you will gain your souls.

### **II Thessalonians 3:6-13**

#### Intro

Our second passage reinforces the belief that we are called to proclaim...by speaking against those folks who feel that they don't need to worry about it. We mentioned last week how God holds us in all things (in life and in death, we are the Lord's). But this support is meant to empower those who believe. Said another way: brothers and sisters in Christ, do not weary in doing what is right; about doing what is of God. The scripture reads this way.

### **II Thessalonians 3:6-13**

6 Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup>and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so

that we might not burden any of you. <sup>9</sup>This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. <sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. <sup>11</sup>For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. <sup>12</sup>Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

### **'The Declaration of Proclamation'**

This past Tuesday Jim and I went out for breakfast at one of the local eateries. We walked in, were immediately escorted to our table, and within about 15 seconds of sitting down had our server introducing herself. The introduction was exactly what you would expect, 'Hello my name is...and I'll be taking care of you this morning. How are you doing today?' Both Jim and I responded in unison that we were doing well and then I followed up with the (almost) proforma question of, 'and how are you doing?' She responded by saying, 'I'm doing well.'

However, everything else about her, from the way her eyes were darting to the body language that she was exuding screamed out the exact opposite.

Well, not only did I recognize it, I picked up what she was putting down and asked her again: 'you sure you're ok? You don't look like you're doing okay.'

As our eyes met she literally took a step back because all of a sudden what was supposed to be a simple business transaction had become the beginnings of a personal conversation, and she responded, 'well, yeah, have you ever had one of those days? It's one of those days.'

She couldn't believe that this stranger in front of her had been willing to acknowledge that things weren't as right as her words said they were, and then that she was willing to admit the tip of the iceberg of whatever was actually leaning upon her.

Why do I tell that story?

Because the proclamations of God, the presence of God in the world, the presence of God in a person's life, is so not limited to what happens inside the safe confines of this religious box that we have created. God's name doesn't need to be specifically mentioned but if we know from where those proclamations emerge, then we are inviting the Holy Spirit to enter into another person's life...and all we may have done is actually mean it when we ask the question, 'and how are you doing?'

And after the events of Tuesday into early Wednesday morning (which have only continued to careen through the week), we need to embrace ever more impassionedly, the responsibilities that are placed before us as people of faith. As we talked about last week, we can't be looking for anyone else to take of the responsibility of picking up and carry the mantle of the Good News of Jesus Christ and o my goodness does the Good News of Jesus Christ need to be heard, and heard, and heard again.

One of the things that stood out to me in the midst of the election night coverage that I was locked into was a statement by one of the now retired big 3 broadcast hosts. He said, 'what's so disheartening is that we don't know how to talk with one another anymore'.

Now there are some who might say that this perspective is turning a blind eye to all of the ways that people of differing opinions have always struggled to talk with one another throughout the course of time (and absolutely the course of our young country).

But what struck the chord was that I do think that we're getting worse at talking with each other. Sure we can shred others through the quazi-anonymity of a keyboard on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or by posting our unedited critique in a comment thread somewhere.

But you know what that is not? Proclaiming the Good News of the love of Jesus Christ! And that's the example that we need to set forward each and every day.

So let's look again at what we hear in Romans 12, beginning in verse 9 because these examples that we mentioned last week absolutely provide the Divine direction of what it means to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

'Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.'

We so need to do this, not just in our political conversations, but in our everyday connections with one another. It's not your personal world and everyone else just has to deal with whatever you want to say or do. We need to rise out of that Divine place that recognizes and exhibits the truth that God has called for Disciples to live a different way. That doesn't mean that we roll over when evil tries to force it's way to the fore, but that we stand strong in the fact that love is not simply exhibited when it's comfortable or safe.

'Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.' How is that service accomplished? Well, 'Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.'

I know, there's a lot there, but look at those examples of proclamation. You know what's not there? 'Just win baby!' No, serving the Lord stands in almost direct conflict with the fear and hatred that was way too apparent both in the lead up to the election and absolutely on Election Day (and again, that was both sides of the ideological perspective).

'Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.'

Live in harmony! That takes work. There are many days that flat out feels impossible, and yet the Lord not only calls us to proclaim such truths through our being...but then tells us how to start to get there: 'do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.'

Now mind you, those steps do not mean that we become submissive. Faithfulness is not submissive: it serves but it is not submissive. And while we are certainly far short of having all the answers, we need to stand lovingly firm in the truths that we are certain of. Love your neighbor as yourself is not just for when your neighbor looks like you, sounds like you, or agrees with you: it's for all those times when our neighbor is anything but. And Paul understood what sort of proclamation he was calling for people

of faith to proclaim. The people he is writing to are living in a pluralistic society where Christians were in the incredible minority (feel anything like the way we feel in our world today?). And yet, there is the call to proclaim! Don't be haughty or claim to be wiser than you are. Live in harmony.

Where do the proclamations go next? 'Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; ...'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

O my goodness we so need to stand and proclaim this.

I clicked on a news article on Thursday morning reporting on the anti-Trump protests that took to the streets in multiple cities on Wednesday night and the first thing that I saw was a picture from Austin, Texas that read 'Blank your racism' (expect that blank was a profanity). 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (for example, by giving food and drink to your enemy when they are hungry or thirsty, and by never avenging ourselves: defending? Yes. Avenging? No.)

As people of faith we need to model for our communities, for the world, for our kids that we are willing to communicate with all because we are able to be held by and abide in the love of Jesus Christ.

We can't go into a shell.

We must proclaim the truths that are of Jesus Christ because as we hear in Romans 14:7: 'We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.'

Our lives are not our own and we need to proclaim that in how we speak, listen, and act in love. God has provided us a declaration of proclamation. Our world has always needed people of faith to use it, and it desperately needs it now.

### **After Sermon Prayer**

God of all, the just ended election in this country has only broadcast all the louder the divides that exist in this country that You have blessed us with. It is in this environment, especially in this environment, that we ask that You help us to embrace the declarations of proclamation that have been there all along. Help us to embrace them so that we might be able to communicate with one another in Your love, modeling for all what it means to stand for what is true, real, and of Your love. Lord, let it be so. Amen.