

**While reading the Gospel of Luke, one can't help but realize that Luke is very concerned with how the World LIVES & BELIVES.** Today he addresses the facts that many are being led astray by the SIGNS of the times and those who claim to be JESUS. **JESUS CRIES OUT... that all should have true faith in him, and NOT be led astray by false teaching.** No matter what, no matter when, *we must remember that "Jesus-- the Way" will be there to give us life.*

In our own time, there have been those who predicted that the END WAS NEAR because of some tragedy that has shaken our world. *There have been many "Doomsday People" who have predicted thru an awful event that God was getting ready to destroy the planet earth.* It is not new when we hear about people claiming such knowledge. **It happened in the time of Jesus, and it will happen again in our time, as well.**

**In the world in which Jesus lived, there were certain events that foretold the end of the world.** One such event was the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. To some people that event signaled the time when Jesus would come again and the end was near. **Luke is careful to teach that the end of the world is not going to be connected with any event we can pre-plan. When it happens, no one will know!!**

**Jesus uses the story of the temple being destroyed to make an important point.** History tells us that on a clear day the temple in Jerusalem was visible from miles away. The reason it was so easy to see was that it was constructed of huge pieces of white marble and when the sun struck it just right it almost looked like a snow-covered mountain. Not unlike our own capital building, the temple was a visible reminder of stability and strength. Anyone who had ever seen it knew that it was always going to be standing as a witness to the greatness of God. **The huge marble pieces would stand the test of time and would always remind the Jewish people of their long-lasting place in the Promised-Land.**

**Our text today tells us that the disciples asked Jesus a very human question. If what Jesus has taught them is true, namely that the temple itself will fall, when will this catastrophic event take place?** Hey, wouldn't you want to know? Of course you would--so would I. **We would want to know because we would be afraid that when it happened, we would not be ready and we might die!** We, like the disciples, would be scared to death! **WE WOULD NOT BE READY.**

**Every church, from time to time, needs to "clean the rolls."** It is always a difficult task and one without many rewards. Sometimes it is hard to hear why people stop attending worship and why they stop supporting the church in other ways, as well. Generally, churches have by-laws or a constitution to guide them in this process. There are several ways to approach the job. One is to send out a letter asking the member what he or she intends in terms of continuing or not continuing as a member of the church. That is the easier choice. The second way is to send volunteers out to visit these folks, talk with them, and personally invite them to come back. As is often the case, the volunteer visitors will discover that most of the people visited had found other things to do on Sunday morning. It is surprising just how much routine determines the things we do. Sometimes a person no longer attends worship simply because they changed their Sunday morning routine. They got used to watching the early morning news shows or something similar. Another common response is, "We came to church when our children were involved. When they outgrew Sunday school, we stopped coming," or "I enjoy going to church on the really big days, like Christmas and Easter. Compared to those days, other services are a little bit dull." **But likely, the most difficult thing to be told is that the church is no longer relevant to that person's life. That means the church has failed this person in some way. Worse yet, it means the church didn't even recognize the problem before the missing member stopped attending.**

**In this day and age of terrorist attacks, of planes falling out of the sky, of not knowing what the future may be, we would be more FAITHFUL to God and One Another if...we were more willing to make sure that our members feel the real need to be a part of the worshipping community—TO BE READY TO RESCUE THEM BEFORE THEY ARE LOST!!!! *It would be truly terrible if our church members, or anyone for that matter, felt as if the only thing to do was sit back and wait for the end of time to happen.* Imagine waiting for the temple to be destroyed without so much as seeking an understanding of why. **The disciples, at least, were not afraid to ask.****

**HOW MANY OF YOU REMEMBER the movie, "The Poseidon Adventure?"** You might remember that a cruise ship was turned upside down by a big wave. Everything and everyone was turned upside down. **Reality was turned "upside down."** *The way out was up to the bottom and back to the front.* The survivors had to go to the bottom of the boat, which was now the top, to get out. **A whole group of people were not willing to follow the lead of the pastor to crawl up a Christmas tree to get out of the ballroom, to safety.** He said: *"Everybody is dead who was above us when the ship turned over. Now they're underneath us. It's up to us to get out of here."*

**THE PEOPLE WHO WAITED FOR HELP DROWNED...** But those who were willing to risk, to have faith eventually were saved. Not all, but most. The pastor was indeed the Christ figure for those people. They eventually trusted in him and were saved.

**AND LIFE IS NO DIFFERENT FOR US!** *"But not a hair of your head will perish." Jesus says, "By your endurance you will gain your souls. By your endurance you will gain your lives. By your faith in me you will be free. The world may be falling apart around you, BUT HAVING FAITH IN ME WILL SAVE YOU."*

**We live in a very confusing and, it seems at times, BROKEN WORLD.** *We live in a world where there is suffering, pain, and sorrow and many things that will pull you away from your FAITH.* We live in a world where competing religions threaten to undo our ability to live together in peace. **Things are not as they once were.** The world is not simple and it is not innocent. **The days of "Leave it to Beaver" are not even known to our current generation.** Our young people today know only a world where terrorism and indifference pervade our world. **They have every right to question where history is going.** We dare not miss the opportunity to help them, like the disciples, **SO THEY WILL NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD.** **If you live life not worried about the end of the world, you will live life to its fullest now and that will help everyone.**

In the mainline church, we sometimes avoid talking about **the Second Coming.** However, today we are faced with a new kind of indifference. It is a feeling of hopelessness that threatens the very foundation of our world. **Now, as it was over 2,000 years ago, the ultimate answer TO OUR "HOPELESSNESS" is to be found in Jesus Christ.**

**THERE IS NO REASON FOR CHRISTIAN PEOPLE TO FEAR THE END OF TIME.** In our suffering and pain, **we have nothing to fear.** We will not be immune to the pain of this world. Christians are not set apart from the challenges of this world. **Someone said: "Whatever the future may hold, God can be trusted to see you through. In the meantime, demonstrate your FAITH & TRUST IN HIM by doing whatever it is God is calling you to do."**

**Several years ago I took a large group of youth from Redeemer to Summer Camp.** It was there we were all led on a **group activity called a "Trust Walk."** Participants paired up and each took a turn leading the other blindfolded throughout the retreat facility. I also had a partner and took my turn. For approximately twenty minutes I was led by the hand around tables and chairs, up and down steps, throughout the building. Something remarkable happened to me when I trusted my life into the hands of my young partner. In those short twenty minutes, a beautiful feeling developed toward that person, a closeness, a need for her. Even when the blindfold came off, I wanted to get better acquainted. I continued to feel positive feelings for my young partner.

**Throughout the Book of Psalms God encourages us to take a TRUST WALK WITH HIM.** Jesus says to all of us, *"Trust in me. I love you so much. I want to help you. Wherever you are hurting, let me bring healing."* Some of you are not sure you can trust him that much and continue to believe that you must handle your own problems! In some cases you may have some success, but there is a better way. **Doing it your way is not the better way.** And don't be afraid of leaning. *"Lean on me,"* Jesus says. When Sir Walter Raleigh, the famed explorer, was on the scaffold awaiting imminent death, he is said to have had a short talk with the axe man. The executioner told his prisoner that the block would be more comfortable if he turned his head the other way. *"My friend," said Sir Walter Raleigh, "it matters little how the head lies so long as the heart is right."* To accept the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior and to trust in him puts the heart right once and for all, for time and eternity. **Problems, even imminent death, are handled more gracefully when we walk through life trusting in the Lord.**

**If you are NOT currently on a "Trust Walk" with the Lord, let me suggest that you begin one right now.** Your partner is ready and waiting - his hand is reaching out for yours. There is but one simple thing to do ... **TAKE HIS HAND.**

**HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, HOPE FOR TODAY, IS WORTH LIVING FOR.** Making each day count even if it is a day where you just "take a walk." *We cannot fear the future, because that is in God's hands, we cannot fear today, because that is in God's hands, too.* So, live for the moment and wait.

**Wait for, "the what is to come not with fear, but with hope."** We wait planning our lives, living our lives, hoping our lives will mean something to those around us.

The following story, I found on the internet. *It nicely sums up today's Gospel Lesson—a lesson that brings to each believer a **PROMISE OF HOPE.***

The pickle jar, as far back as I can remember, sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom. When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar. As a small boy, I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar. They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled. I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar and admire the copper and silver circles that glinted like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank. Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck.

Each and every time, as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. **"Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back."** Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly. **"These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me."**

We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show me the few coins nestled in his palm. "When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again." He always let me drop the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, we grinned at each other.

**"You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters," he said. I'll see to that." He Was Right!!**

**The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town.** Once, while visiting my parents, I used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed. A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad was a man of few words, and never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have.

When I married, I told my wife, Susan, about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me. No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill, and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar. To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring catsup over my beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. **"When you finish college, Son," he told me, his eyes glistening, "You'll never have to eat beans again ... unless you want to."**

The first Christmas after our daughter, Jessica, was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. "She probably needs to be changed," she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her. When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes. She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room.

"Look," she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar. I looked up and saw that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt.

**Neither one of us could speak. That pickle jar was, and is, A SYMBOL OF "HOPE" IN THEIR WORLD.**

**Where is your pickle jar? Your symbol...your Act of Hope?? Amen.**