

Title: THE ETHICS OF THE SECOND COMING, LUKE 21:25-36
(Chatham, NJ; 11/29/15, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: The passage implies the ethical dimension of discipleship: seeing the world differently, preparation, and self-discipline.

Purpose: To challenge the congregation not only to conform to these ethical challenges but also to challenge others to conform to them as well.

Introduction:

1. We are in the midst of a season when many people think about the birth of Christ or at least what the Christmas season has come to represent for them.
2. Despite the commercialism and glitz that the world has made out of this, the spirit of giving is still deep within the heart of what the season means.
3. Jesus, however, lays the foundation in Luke 21 for some greater demands relating to his coming.
4. We are between the times of his first and second coming; he wants us to see the connections between them.
5. On the one hand his first coming exhibits the good and the sentimental: the birth of a king in a poor environment who will bring peace and good will to earth.
6. On the other hand, his second coming exhibits challenge, judgment, and warning.
7. Today we consider the ethical challenges inherent in the message of Luke 21:25-36.

I. See the World Differently from the Way the World Sees Itself

A. This Generation, 32

1. Probably refers to those living at the time
2. Yet this passage portrays time in a mysterious and complex way
3. Parts of it clearly refer to the destruction of the Temple
4. While other parts speak of a more spectacular coming and of final judgment
5. Jesus doesn't separate the two things as neatly as we might like

B. Another way of thinking about "generation"

1. Those who oppose Jesus and his message and thus who oppose God
2. Acts 2:40 could carry also both meanings and so have a contemporary ring
3. Do we not live in a hostile kingdom? Or at least among those who have still not fully accepted the demands of the Kingdom of Peace?

C. An idolatrous environment

1. The live nativity scene was a medieval attempt to break through the partying, carousing, and lack of concern for the real significance of the birth of Christ
2. The world always perverts God's ways to suit its own interests
3. The glitz, glamour, and partying that surrounds Christmas today is not new
4. Frankly, I like the joy of the season, and I am not opposed to celebration
5. But the world forgets the deeper significance behind it
6. Jesus speaks of the "distress," "perplexity," and "foreboding" of the nations
7. This will happen because they failed to see the world in the way God sees it
8. Jesus may have come in a manger, but when he comes a second time it will be for the salvation of disciples and punishment of the unrighteous
9. That's the way God sees it.
10. We must change our vision to suite His.

II. Prepare for God's Future rather Than Our Present

A. "The Son of Man coming," 27

1. We live between the first and second

2. Though we can celebrate the first, the second is the real challenge
3. The apocalyptic background transcends the image of a baby in a manger
4. Imagine a manger with the background of what Jesus talks about here
5. Redemption is drawing near (28 & Romans 13:11)

B. Be ready and beware

1. "Watch yourselves," 34 – dissipation, drunkenness, and cares of this life
2. We must be concerned for the cares of the next life
3. Stay awake and pray at all times, 36
4. 1 Peter has as much to say about this as any of the NT letters:
 - 1:13-19, holiness demands preparation and being sober-minded
 - 2:11, abstain from passions of the flesh
 - 4:1-6, verse 3 seems particularly relevant to today
 - 4:7, be self-controlled

III. Be Self-Disciplined rather than Self-Indulgent

A. The coming is near

1. This is consistent from Jesus' discourse here all the way through the end of Revelation, "Behold, I am coming soon!" (22:20)
2. Yet this does not function as an "opium of the beyond" to help us escape from the world, but rather as a power that awakens us to live righteously

B. The message of self-indulgence

1. It shows up in a lot of ways: sexual immorality, drunkenness, but more than that
2. Paul Harvey was fond of saying, "Self-government won't work without self-discipline."
3. Michael Jackson wrote a song: "Man in the Mirror" – "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change."
4. Will Smith talked about his marriage recently: the headline for the story emphasized one thing he said about the struggle of being married
5. Reading further revealed something better: basically when he and his wife encounter difficulties, they don't run away, rather they think about how they can be a better person and bring that to the relationship
6. It takes reflection and self-discipline to do this
7. Dr. Everett Piper's message to his university students (see copy)

Conclusion:

1. Celebrate the season with great joy and anticipation.
2. God has done a marvelous thing by sending his son.
3. Use this time to better prepare yourself for His second coming.
4. See the world and yourself the way God sees it; prepare by being sober-minded and self-disciplined.
5. Rejoice; your salvation draws nearer with every passing moment.

Dr. Everett Piper, President

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This past week, I actually had a student come forward after a university chapel service and complain because he felt “victimized” by a sermon on the topic of 1 Corinthians 13. It appears that this young scholar felt offended because a homily on love made him feel bad for not showing love! In his mind, the speaker was wrong for making him, and his peers, feel uncomfortable.

I’m not making this up. Our culture has actually taught our kids to be this self-absorbed and narcissistic! Any time their feelings are hurt, they are the victims! Anyone who dares challenge them and, thus, makes them “feel bad” about themselves, is a “hater,” a “bigot,” an “oppressor,” and a “victimizer.”

I have a message for this young man and all others who care to listen. That feeling of discomfort you have after listening to a sermon is called a conscience! An altar call is supposed to make you feel bad! It is supposed to make you feel guilty! The goal of many a good sermon is to get you to confess your sins—not coddle you in your selfishness. The primary objective of the Church and the Christian faith is your confession, not your self-actualization!

So here’s my advice:

If you want the chaplain to tell you you’re a victim rather than tell you that you need virtue, this may not be the university you’re looking for. If you want to complain about a sermon that makes you feel less than loving for not showing love, this might be the wrong place.

If you’re more interested in playing the “hater” card than you are in confessing your own hate; if you want to arrogantly lecture, rather than humbly learn; if you don’t want to feel guilt in your soul when you are guilty of sin; if you want to be enabled rather than confronted, there are many universities across the land (in Missouri and elsewhere) that will give you exactly what you want, but Oklahoma Wesleyan isn’t one of them.

At OKWU, we teach you to be selfless rather than self-centered. We are more interested in you practicing personal forgiveness than political revenge. We want you to model interpersonal reconciliation rather than foment personal conflict. We believe the content of your character is more important than the color of your skin. We don’t believe that you have been victimized every time you feel guilty and we don’t issue “trigger warnings” before altar calls.

Oklahoma Wesleyan is not a “safe place”, but rather, a place to learn: to learn that life isn’t about you, but about others; that the bad feeling you have while listening to a sermon is called guilt; that the way to address it is to repent of everything that’s wrong with you rather than blame others for everything that’s wrong with them. This is a place where you will quickly learn that you need to grow up!

This is not a day care. This is a university!