

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 21:5-19

***"Lift Up Your Heads"***

A Few Moments ago we prayed together these words from Psalm 98:

Sing to the Lord a new song, \*  
for he has done marvelous things.  
With his right hand and his holy arm \*  
has he won for himself the victory.  
The Lord has made known his victory; \*  
his righteousness has he openly shown in  
the sight of the nations.

And now I would like you to hear the words of the Prophet Joel "*Be not afraid, O land; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things.*" (Joel 2:21)

Wow! The Lord has won Himself a victory. It is His victory, and not ours. We just finished a brutal election – filled with many surprises. The outcome was not what mainstream media, progressives, or the democratic candidate expected at all. There were tears late in the evening when the tide went in the unexpected direction for many. So let me ask you this week: How is your peace? Uncertainty can lead to a shaking of your inner peace.

People are looking for some assurance, some peace of mind that they can hold on to. When people feel 'out of control' they get angry easily, they do things so they can feel in control (just turn on the TV to see what is going on in this country). PEACE OF MIND IS SHAKEN – THESE ARE UNCERTAIN TIMES. Is your peace shaken? What do we do? Jesus had something to say to his disciples about the uncertain and troubling times that would come to them, and I wholeheartedly believe that it can apply to us – today, right now, and in the weeks to come.

People saw security in the temple. To them it guaranteed the presence and protection of Almighty God. But Jesus says NO! The temple will be destroyed.

Where is our security?

- Is it in the temple OR the God of the temple?
- Is our security in this building – or in the One we worship in it – the Lord of All?

Jesus warned that in difficult times there would be deceivers who would be declaring themselves to be 'the Christ' the Messiah. In our own recent history we can read of and remember people like

- The Rev. Sung Myung Moon who declared himself to be divine – and held marriages of hundreds – designed by himself; he was the matchmaker. People gave all their savings to this mere man.
- There was Jimmy Jones, the founder of the "People's Temple" and their mass suicide by drinking "kool-aide" in 1978.
- Let's not forget David Koresh – and the "Branch Davidians" who went to their death in the stand-off near Waco, Texas in 1993.

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- You may not have heard of this guy; but not too very long ago there was Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda who is not your typical minister. De Jesus, or "Daddy" as his thousands of followers called him, does not merely pray to God: **He said that he is God.** He told a CNN interview in February of 2007 "The spirit that is in me is the same spirit that was in Jesus of Nazareth." Well – Jose died of a stroke in 2013 – and he is still dead!

Jesus said for us to watch out - to be aware – that the time is coming – that many will come in His name – and **then** there would come:

- Wars
- Earthquakes
- Famines
- Fearful events and great signs

But before these happen, there will be:

- Persecution
- Trials

Jesus says that the faithful will need to be witnesses of His. He further cautions you to make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourself. He said: *"For I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict."* (Luke 21:15) Whatever the trial – whatever the circumstance – Jesus has got us covered. There is a military saying – "Got your six," our veterans know what that means; you have got 12 o'clock in front of you, right behind you in 6 o'clock; if He has got you 'six' He has got your back! When the time of trial comes – those faithful in Christ will be given the words to speak the truth – **the truth that no one will be able to take away or deny – that Jesus Christ is Lord – "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."** (John 14:6) Our Savior, our Lord is reminding us that He is the one who is our Peace – He is our Comfort, He is our Guide and our Protector. Belief in Him – and only in Him - means eternal life. My brothers and sisters in Christ – I pray that this will bring new and clearer meaning to the words from John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."* Faith – belief in Him is everything and will conquer all things – even death. Jesus says in verse 19 of today's Holy Gospel *"By your endurance you will gain your souls."* Plainly put - by standing firm you will gain life – life eternal in Christ Jesus. He is our peace – **He is our Rock** – and that never wavers. Faith in Him should also be unwavering.

Jesus, our Rock and our Salvation tells us that when the times of the Gentiles is complete – and we are now in the times of the Gentiles – then certain signs will be evidence of His return. He said in Luke 21:25-28 *"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

- Sun, moon and stars

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- Because of the roar & fury of the sea - people will be afraid and won't know what to do
- People will faint with fear

When these things begin to happen – Jesus tells us what to do, and how to prepare: He says: **“stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”** The dead cannot stand up – but the living can stand, and the living can lift their heads in righteousness and joy of the truth.

Well, when the water is rising and it is full of hungry alligators – How do we ‘stand up and lift our heads’? I am sure we could fill a whiteboard with answers that would come to your mind:

- Do what is right
- Trust in Jesus
- Hold onto your faith – How? What does this mean?
- Sometimes FEAR overwhelms!

Jesus gives us a good idea of how we should be ‘Kingdom focused’ – rather than earthly focused. Call it if you will – the “big picture” for all eternity.

We need to be careful! Don't be distracted! Don't spend your time feasting!

Don't be too busy caught up with worldly things.

Don't worry about what you will eat, or drink or wear!

Seek first the kingdom of God! Seek a relationship with Jesus Christ – and be in conversation with Him – in prayer and most importantly – being in His Holy Word. I often tell folks when I meet with them that one of the most powerful prayers that anyone can pray is “help me Jesus!” From your heart “help me Jesus” and just as powerful – “thank you Jesus.” For as we are always ready to receive – we have to be ready to give thanks.

If the way you make yourself feel better is with “the stuff of this world” – being fearful and selfish, in a shop till you drop mode - you won't be able to think straight! And when the day comes - you won't be ready! We need to be ready – constantly; to be always on the watch; to be in conversation with Christ. If today is the day – and now is the hour – are you ready to meet Him, without question? Go ahead - answer honestly! Ok – well that's easier said than done. So, HOW?

The Apostle Peter said *“You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”* (2 Peter 3:11-12) We ought to *“live holy and godly lives!”* Ask yourselves: Are we two different people – at church you are one way – and at home you are another. There might even be *a third* one in there – when you are with your friends – your language and your actions might be totally un-Godly. You know what? We need to be consistent Christians – 24/7 – yes, even while driving your car! You know what I am talking about – American people like to speak with their hands! We need to ask Jesus to help us to be more like Him – you'd be amazed.

As we look forward to the day of God, also known as the day of the Lord . . . that day will bring destruction of everything. That should not make us afraid - because Jesus, in keeping with His

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promise, will bring a new heaven and a new earth, the home where righteousness will reign - and there will be no pain or death, or weeping and gnashing of teeth. Since the very beginning – yes, all the way back to Genesis – **God has been as good as His Word** – He has always kept His promises – even when mankind could not hold up its' end of the bargain.

Peter – who learned at the feet of Jesus – and might be the one who learned more about being a disciple, love and forgiveness than *any of the Apostles* reminds us to “*be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*” (1 Peter 4:7-8)

My friends, the love of Jesus Christ is the answer – as we prepare during these “last days,” for it is through His love that we will only know peace – and it is that peace which will help us to endure all things – with our eyes on the real prize – which is resting for all eternity in His loving presence. The choice is each one of ours – You can know peace – through Jesus Christ – or know NO peace at all. Indeed – Jesus is the answer! The choice belongs to each one of us. “*Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:16)