

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23 2025

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"The Time is Coming..."

Based on Jeremiah 23:1-6

I have the power to scatter you.

I have the power to gather you.

The time is coming...

If you were looking for a warm and fuzzy feel-good sermon, today is not the day. Today is the day for the four horsemen, beasts from the underworld, the apocalypse, and most fearful of all, the silence that comes after it. Welcome to the last Sunday of the Christian calendar.

It all stems from fear. Let's walk back in time a bit. We can trace that fear of the future right back to the foot of the cross.

- The disciples, in fear for their lives, hid themselves as Jesus agonized on the cross; the same hidden places He first appeared to them after His resurrection.

- After His ascension into heaven, the disciples once again looked at each other in fear, wondering what to do next and who was going to be in charge.

- It was a fear of what future ministry would look like, their lack of confidence and a narrow vision of God's plan that made them lean into the idea that Jesus was coming back, soon to save them from all this.

- And the longer it went, that He did not come back, the more fearful believers, disciples, and scholars alike became about what lay ahead.

- And in that fear, the future without Christ became hell, a place of brimstone and damnation and eternal fire.

- And such a place over time, became a misguided cornerstone of one's salvation, a way to prevent that one way trip to the devil's home.

- And that fear took over our thinking: in churches, in homes, and became a tool for punishment, judgement, and even in part, colonialism. One must be saved in Christ in order to avoid eternity in hell.

If you look back at the evolution of our theological thinking about heaven, hell, and the coming of Christ, its framework was fear; not grace, compassion, and care, the very things Christ spoke of

and demonstrated to everyone He met.

So, how did we get from care and compassion to apathy and apocalypse?

Fear.

Instead of trusting that God had, and continues to have a plan; instead of living out our days to the best of ability to be that example of Christ-like principles, we turned to look for 'signs' that the end was near; a sign that Christ was coming after all this time, a signal that we'd better get our ducks lined up.

Rather like a certain red-headed someone I know, who waits until she gets the notice from the dentist for a check-up, then begins brushing her teeth a little longer and flossing a little more. Just to help the visit go a little more smoothly, and hedge her bets on the scolding she will receive about taking care of her teeth.

Every generation since the book has been written, has been able to look back into Revelations, with its graphic images of death and destruction, and point to a verse and say, "See, the end is coming. The world is evil, and

Jesus is coming back soon to take us away from all this that is unholy, and place us in paradise with Him for all of eternity."

Now folks, I hate to tell you this, but that is exactly what the apostles thought and said over two thousand year ago.

- And we're still here.
- And we're still waiting.

Which means, either you and I missed the memo, and were left behind, or we're not supposed to be so concerned about the date and time when Jesus will return but pay better attention to what we are doing right now, here, for the Lord, and why we are doing it.

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The time is coming...

"Shepherds, wake up!" said Jeremiah. "Those in charge of the temple. Those in charge of the village. Those in charge of your family. Wake up. Do you not understand what I can do? Not only can I scatter you across foreign lands, I can control the ones who you think control you. Whether they are for good or for evil, I control them, not you, and not their kings.

And the time is coming that I will send One who can see through you, through your

words and your motions, and He can tell who is true and who is not. He will be the judge, and you will not fool Him with your words or your deeds. For he is 'a righteous branch' of the line of David.

And you thought that mention of the 'righteous branch' was a clever way to segway into the lessons of Advent.

You misunderstand. It was a warning.

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.

~Jeremiah 23:5-6a

And we'd better be ready.

I don't know about you, but Jeremiah's words are almost more frightening than the four beasts from Revelations. The words are softer, but the meaning is haunting, and it lingers...

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The time is coming...

Someone said to me just this past week, "The end is near you know. Look all around you. The signs are here. The end is near." Fear has risen its ugly head again.

But there are other signs as well. And if we are so filled with fear about the 'end days that are coming, we will miss the signs that are here in front of us right now; signs that Christ is already here.

Today I have breath to breathe the smells of Christmas coming.

Today I can see the beauty of the frost in the morning.

Today I can smile and share a good story.

Today I can pray and come closer to Christ.

Today I really can make a difference to someone, somewhere.

It's about today.

It's about being faithful, today.

It's not about tomorrow.

It's about you, here, now, living righteously for the living Christ.

This is what Jeremiah wanted the people of his day to see.

This is what Jesus wanted His disciples to understand.

What signs will you look for this year, as we begin to journey to Bethlehem?

Will you look in fear, or will you look for promise?

For the time is coming...