November 17th, 2019.  Luke 21:5-19. Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.

Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

**“The Church Jesus Built”**

**Let us pray: *O Lord, thanks for lead us to the sanctuary for worship you. We believe you are everywhere, but we come to the sanctuary because we would be sincere and truth before You, our God. Grant us this worship will be in spirit and truth. Amen.***

I would like to talk about the lovely princess, Cinderella. As you may know about her story, she was suffered by her stepmother and stepsisters. Her name, Cinderella, means an Ash- princess, which means she never got pretty dresses, but dirty dresses while her stepsisters have beautiful dresses. One day, all the girls in the country are invited to the prince’s party. While her stepsisters are preparing to go for the party, she should be stayed at home to work by her stepmother’s order. However, she would go to the party. As her wish, an angel comes in to help her. By the angel’s magic, she could get a pretty dress, shoes, and even a carriage. However, the angel gives her a warning. “When midnight comes, all magic is disappeared. You should come back home before midnight.” Therefore, she should keep the deadline of midnight. Otherwise, she loses everything. She can enjoy the party with the prince, but she should keep the period to return back home before midnight. This is a very famous story about the deadline.

I would introduce the other story to you regarding the deadline. In the text of today, Jesus talks about the deadline for salvation. Some people look up the beautiful temple, and speak about the temple, “how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God.” In history, we may know that it was the Temple of Herod. Israelites have a passion for temples because they believe that God is dwelling in the temple. Since they lost the first temple, Solomon’s temple, so-called Jerusalem Temple, Jewish is passionate about building the temple, and then they wish they would return back to their country. The first temple was destroyed by Babylon in BC 586. After Israelites were released from Babylon, they built the second temple (Zerubbabel) in BC 536. However, it was much smaller than the first temple.

The temple the people talk to Jesus, took for 46 years at that time, and completed in AD 63. It took 83 years to build the temple. It was the third temple for Jewish. The king of Herod used the people’s religious mind, and he took much more tax from Jewish for the building of the temple. All the building was built with marble stones and covered with gold. The people thought that it was dedicated to God, and they were proud of it. But, it was for human desire as the symbol of the king Herod’s authority and power.

When Jesus heard from the people’s praise to the temple, and their belief, Jesus told his disciples, “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” (V.6). After he talks about the signs which all the buildings will be destroyed, he said to his disciples, “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:27-28). Jesus meant, be careful with the deadline for salvation is coming soon. Jesus said, “Beware that you are not led astray.”

What were some of “the signs” Jesus said as evidence that his coming was soon? Jesus said there will be wars, great earthquakes, and in various places, famines, and plagues. In fact, we have experiences of wars, famines, and plagues already. The earthquakes happened in China, Russia, Japan, California, Haiti, Mexico, and Iran, and so on. And then, over 22,000 people in the world starve to death each day. In the 20th century, there were over 3,000 wars, and still, we hear the rumors and news of the wars; the Mideast, South Africa, Iran, Iraq, and even Korea.

Jesus predicted before 2000 years that all things will happen. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33). Therefore, we know it is almost there. The deadline for salvation comes very soon, which means Jesus’ coming back soon. Nevertheless, we sometimes forget what Jesus said, and look up the beautiful buildings, and praise our modern materialism. We remember that Jesus talked to the people who appreciated the beautiful architecture of the temple.

So, you may wonder if Jesus hates the temple of God. I want to clarify what Jesus meant. Jesus would teach that God is not dwelling in the temple only. In the gospel of John, Jesus rebuked with many merchants for selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money in the temple courts and cleaned up the temple. And then he said, “Get these out here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”(John 2:16). And, he said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19). Jesus rebuked against the authorities and the power of the world, which was deceiving the people of God. The temple of God is not limited to the buildings. God may dwell everywhere. The real temple is Jesus himself.

All materials will be passed away as Jesus mentioned, but the Words of God never pass away. The Words of God are the source of our lives because the Word is the living God. The Gospel of John says, “The Word became flesh and made God’s dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Yes, the Word became Jesus Christ, and he came to us as the human in the world. Therefore, we, who believe in Jesus Christ as our savior, are the temple. In other words, we are the church because the Holy Spirit, Jesus sent us is among us. We are the church Jesus built with his death on the Cross.

Jesus went back to heaven, but he will be back again. In Acts, says that “this same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Even though Jesus went back to heaven, He did not abandon us. Jesus promised us he will be back soon, which is the deadline for salvation. However, we do not know when due is exactly.

Jesus said, “it is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” That being said, we believe that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” And, we follow his last commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). This is our duty as the church Jesus built by the deadline for salvation.

Let us go back to Cinderella’s story. One day, she lost her shoe in a hurry to return back home. However, the prince found her shoe, and he tried to find her with her shoe. The prince finally found Cinderella, and they live together in happiness. So, she kept the deadline even though she lost her shoe. I mean that even though we may lose all materials we got in the world if we keep the deadline for salvation, we are saved and get eternal life. So, let us remember the deadline for salvation and follow Jesus’s commission. Remember, we are the church Jesus built with his death on the Cross.

Thanks be to God. Amen.