

“Christ’s Unshakable Promise”  
Sermon by Lisa Crismore  
November, 17, 2019 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

Luke 21:5-19

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, “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.”

They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” Then he said to them, “Nations will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your soul.”

This week the new Mr. Roger’s movie will be out in theaters. It is titled “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” and the actor, Tom Hanks, plays Mr. Rogers. It was actually the opening film for Heartland Film Festival this year but I missed it as I was returning from Spain. So, I am definitely looking forward to seeing it. This past week I have been watching You Tube videos of Mr. Rogers in anticipation. Fred Rogers focused on recognizing the feelings of children and what emotions they experienced in their life.

When he was little his parents didn’t like it when he got mad and banged on the piano. But he loved music so he learned to show his feelings with his music. If he was mad or deeply sad, he would play music that had the low, minor chords. Like this (Dawnie play).

This past week, I have found the music that I have been playing in my head has been rather dark and sad. The snow on Monday. My horrible head cold. The school shootings on Thursday morning. At Hispanic Ministry Lead Team, I learned that Rene’s daughter, who we have been praying over the last two years to receive asylum in the United States, was turned down. She and her seven year old have four months to return to Guatemala. If you remember Rene is the guitarist for the band for what used to be Iglesia Nueva Creación and is now is Iglesia Hermandad Cristiana.

It is though I am standing there listening to Jesus feeling as overwhelmed as the disciples in our text today. Jesus is talking about the future. Wars, earthquakes, plagues – nations will rise against nations, kingdoms against kingdoms. The beautiful temple is going to be destroyed!

Jesus has rode into Jerusalem for one last time. He is with his disciples at Herod’s glorious temple. He has overturned the tables of those buying and selling in anger and sent them

packing. The poor widow has come and given all she has as an offering. Now, he is telling them that things are going to get pretty bad! How are they going to deal with it?

When you are arrested and persecuted, Jesus says, "This will be your opportunity to give your testimony." This will be a time for you to share your faith. Don't worry about being prepared because Jesus will give you the words and the wisdom to answer.

I think we have a choice of how we live out our faith. Fred Rogers never talked about God. But, he lived his life in service of others especially when it came to children. He never cashed in on his fame by selling Mr. Rogers dolls or Daniel the Striped Tiger puppets. During his Commencement Address at Dartmouth College, he shared a story about a Special Olympic Team that he had recently heard about in the media. There were a group of eight runners. They all got off on the race okay but about half way through a boy fell. He called for help. The other seven runners turned back as they approached the finish line and went back to help him. All seven! These children with special needs helped the boy off the ground, locked arms together and crossed the finish line together. They did not let down syndrome or autism define them but their hearts. They were all hailed as winners of the race! We have a choice of how we live out our faith.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=907yEkALaAY>

We can chose to demean and cut down others. We can chose to grant grace and forgiveness. We can chose to look the other way when injustice is done. We can chose to stand up for others when they cannot speak for themselves. We can chose to serve ourselves. We can chose to serve others. We can chose to hate. We can chose to love.

I want to say today that I am blessed to be a Presbyterian. Yes, I am blessed to be a Christian. The reason I say this is that I believe the PC(USA), our denomination, is helping elders and pastors to live out their faith. I recently attended a Coaching Summit gifted to me by the Synod of Lincoln Trails.

Many of you are probably familiar with coaching in sports. Well this is an opportunity to meet with a coach, who will work with me on personal life goals as well as my call as a pastor. The vision of the Synod is that this coaching experience is something that we can take back and use with our congregations and Presbytery as leaders of the church. The church is changing. It is not like what we experienced in the past. There are no text books or road maps. This is giving us support as we maneuver our way through this.

I found out this past week that our Presbytery over the next year is going to be focusing on racism and justice. We will spend our time discussing difficult questions about what is going on in our country concerning violence and hatred. We will talk and learn from each other about how we feel about racism and justice. What can we do to help God's kingdom concerning these issues.

Next church is a national group of Presbyterian leaders who gather to learn and grow in transition as the church is ever changing. The current Director is the Rev. Jessica Tate. These are some of the challenging questions she asks - Who is your neighbor? Who is the person sitting next to you in the pew? Who is the person that lives at Brickyard Flats? Who are the people in our community outside the church? What are their dreams, hopes,

stresses? How do we as John Knox church build a better neighborhood?

(<https://nextchurch.net/about-next/>)

As Fred Rogers explained that as he continued to play the dark, low notes, he would find that his tune turned brighter as he continued to play. He realized that his sadness or madness could be changed with the music.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AtLIJjEb4>)

It is our faith and hope in Christ that helps us endure. It is the endurance that Jesus says will gain our souls or as The Message puts it, "we will be saved."

There was something that Mr. Rogers did when he was accepting awards for his work in television. He would ask people to be silent for 10 seconds. During that time, he wanted them to think about the people who made a positive difference in their life. For us today, I ask you to think about the people who have had an impact on your faith journey. Those people who have lived out their testimonies through their words and actions.

Wait 10 seconds....these people may be living now or have already gone to heaven. These are the people that I believe Jesus gave to you as your guiding wisdom to live your life of faith. How do you think they would feel if they realized that you thought of them? Have you ever told them? If they are still living, I would invite you to do so.

Now, in the midst of all that is going on in our world today, how do we act and live out our faith? Jesus is saying this is our opportunity to live our testimony. How do we respond?

Thanks be to God for Jesus who came to earth to show us how to serve and give and live and love. Amen.

In the closing Benediction – this was shared.

Fred Rogers said, "As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has- or ever will have- something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression."