**ASKING THE WRONG QUESTIONS**

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Our sermon text today comes from Luke 21:5-19, where Jesus doesn’t answer the disciples’ questions but offers them something better.

**Asking the Right Questions**

You may have heard the saying, “There’s no such thing as a dumb question.”

* Most of us have heard questions that might make us want to disagree with that statement.
* Especially if you are in a meeting and you have had a long day and someone keeps asking questions to prolong the meeting.
* But it’s better to ask questions in order to learn.
* HOWEVER - It’s also important to ask the right questions, or the answers you get might not be as helpful as you think.

**Here’s an example:**

*There was a Russian entrepreneur who started a nightclub in New York City. He wanted the best chef for his nightclub, so he hired a well-known chef who had cooked for a wealthy family for more than twenty years. It seemed like a perfect match, except the entrepreneur did not ask the question regarding the chef’s ability to scale up his cooking for almost 200 people every night. He also failed to ask about the chef’s ability to manage a large cooking staff. The entrepreneur only asked the question, “Who would be a great cook for the nightclub?” Because he didn’t ask the right questions, his nightclub failed.*

*The Russian entrepreneur is now a cab driver.*

**An example of a person who did not ask the wrong questions was Henry Ford in producing the Model T**

*The automobile was one of the most successful product launches of all time. Indeed, Ford was widely regarded as a marketing genius.Ford created the modern automobile industry. He gave people what they wanted, needed, valued, expected, and were willing and able to pay for.*

*According to Steve Jobs: "If Ford had asked people via a focus group or sample surveys what they wanted, they would've said, 'Faster horses.'" The right answer to the wrong question.*



**Asking the right questions is important if you want to get the right answers.**

* Our sermon text today shows the disciples asking the wrong questions and Jesus giving them completely different answers than what they thought they needed to know.
* Of course, with Jesus, he turned their wrong questions into a learning opportunity.

**Today’s message is take from Luke 21 (history)**

* Luke wrote this gospel around 85 AD about 15 years after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans in 70 AD.
* For Luke’s readers this account is more a reflection on the temples destruction not a prediction of it.
* Luke uses the destruction of this magnificent temple to make a statement on the impermanence (temporariness) of human achievement, in response to their wonder at the temple’s beauty.



* Jesus attempts to divert the attention of the audience from their fascination with the thing that you see.
* Implying that their focus should be on something else
	+ Scripture doesn’t exactly specify what but
	+ But perhaps Jesus thinks his audience should focus their attention on the poor NOT on the temple building.
* Jesus here talks about hard times ahead.
* It as easy for the Jews to feel we are God’s special people, we have his special temple which no one can harm.
* The people may have felt that nothing bad could happen to them because they were under God’s protection.
* Ie We are God’s church nothing nothing can happen us we will be spared and not go through tribulation.
* But all of the apostles suffered terrible deaths except John.
* One things we are promised as a Christian – we will be persecuted.

Let read the story of asking the right questions found in Luke 21:5-19 (NRSV)

### **LUKE 21:5-19**

**5When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said,**

**6“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.”**

**7They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”**

**8And 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.**

**9“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.”**

**10Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom;**

**11there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.**

**12“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.**

**13This will give you an opportunity to testify.**

**14So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance**

**15for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.**

**16You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.**

**17You will be hated by all because of my name.**

**18But not a hair of your head will perish.**

**19By your endurance you will gain your souls.**

In order to fully understand what is going on here we need to understand the context of what was being said. Notice verses 1-4 of this same chapter

**LUKE 21:1-4 1 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury;**

**2he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.**

**3He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them,**

**4for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.” (NRSV)**

**In the story of the widow’s offering** sets the context for for Jesus’ apocalyptic message that appears in vv. 5-19.

* Apocalyptic literature uses unsettling language and imagery as a means to assure the faithful that they should keep their trust in God even when facing the most challenging of circumstances.
* Rather than providing us with prophetic timelines or signs, apocalyptic language in the Bible encourages us to think differently about the world by challenging our worldview.



**For example, Jesus and his disciples had just witnessed the generosity of the poor widow, but then in v. 5, the disciples were going on about the beauty of the temple and the beautiful stones adorning it.**

* They were focused on what seemed to be a solid, permanent structure, one that could endure anything, and Jesus’ words about the temple’s impermanence were jarring.
* We have seen this in the word today things that seemed so solid have crumbled in front of our eyes.
* The physical things around us are not the true reality – The solid things around us are the spiritual things.
* People have worked a lifetime to amass a retirement only to watch it crumble in front of them.
* In setting up v.5-19 with the story of the widow’s mite, Luke may have been emphasizing Jesus’ mission of caring for the poor and the oppressed rather than the preservation of a building.
* He also may have been contrasting the impermanence of humanmade things with the everlasting commitment of God to humanity.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

* The disciples’ reaction (v. 7) to Jesus’ statement about the temple’s destruction in vv. 5-6 is to ask the wrong questions:
* Let’s read

### **LUKE 21:5-7**

**5When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said,**

**6“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.”**

**7They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?”**

**Jesus here tells about the destruction of the seemly permanent temple.**

**The disciples’ questions are probably similar to what we would ask if faced with making plans, anticipation, or even fear:**

* When will this happen so I can prepare for it?
* How can I be involved?
* Or, how can I avoid this?
* How can we avoid the great tribulation
* We may want a wakeup call or a warning, so we are not caught unawares.

**NOTICE: Jesus doesn’t address their request for times and dates and signs.**

* Don’t we all want to know times and dates
* When will the end come
* What day will Jesus return
* Instead, here Jesus focuses on the paradox of the world: great sorrow exists side by side with great joy and beauty.
* Believers must learn to hold these two contrasting truths at the same time.

### **LUKE 21:8-9 8And 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.**

**9“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.”**



**Jesus talks**

* about wars and false prophets but then encourages the disciples not to be terrified.
* When describing terrible events , Jesus tells his listeners not to be afraid
* There is nothing particularly original about Jesus’ predictions here.
* Every age has had its false prophets, natural catastrophes, we should not make the mistake of describing on set of specific catastropies.
* The point that Jesus is making is WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN – AND THEY WILL we should not be terrified.
* During those time we need to trust that God will remain present in our lives.
* Jesus lists more bad news, things that could go wrong like earthquakes and famines and persecution, in vv. 10-12

### **LUKE 21:10-15 10Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom;**

**11there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.**

**12“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.**



* Many people do not know where their next meal will come from
* Millions dying of malnutrition



* Black death,
* Covid
* SARS
* AIDS
* But in vv. 13-15, he seems to change tune and talks about the opportunity that these things present.



* Notice here Jesus details the persecution that his followers can expect to face: ARRESTS; PERSECUTION; TRIALS BEFORE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES, BETRAYAL BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS, HATRED ON ACCOUNT OF JESUS’ NAME, AND EVEN DEATH AND EXECUTION.
* Anyone who follows Jesus can expect the same hostility that that Jesus and the prophets endured.
* The book of Acts provides numerous examples of Christian leaders facing precisely the some of troubles Jesus describes here.

### **LUKE 21:13-15 13This will give you an opportunity to testify.**

**14So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance**

**15for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.**

**NOTICE WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT THE EVENTS THAT WILL HAPPEN.**

* Does Jesus lay blame or tell us to lay blame the people who are persecuting his followers.
* NO!!!!
* He says this persecution is 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.
* God gave Moses and other prophets the capacity to SPEAK and CONFRONT THEIR DOUBTERS AND OPPONENTS
* **What about some of us who worry or fear having to give and answer of the hope that lies within us.**
	+ I don’t know how to speak
	+ I don’t know what to say to people
	+ I get nervous
	+ I can’t share my faith

Notice

**LUKE 12:11-12 11When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you will answer or what you are to say, 12for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.”**

* Jesus gives the promise of he wisdom of he HS in times where we may have to testify
* He assures us that the power and the presence of the HS will be with us.



**Jesus tells us the bad we experience gives us opportunity to share the gospel with the right words given at just the right time.**

* Again, another paradox: the reality of persecution alongside the promise of divinely inspired words and wisdom.
* Jesus however wasn’t finished; he continues the passage by telling them even their own families will betray them, and they will be hated because they follow him:
	+ Last week Debbie talked about the persecuted church where people would betray their own families and hate those who follow Jesus.

### **LUKE 21:16-17 16You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.**

**17You will be hated by all because of my name.**

Then he finishes with a promise – and here’s the final paradox:9

**LUKE 21:18-19 18But not a hair of your head will perish.**

**19By your endurance you will gain your souls.**

**An interesting contrast here** –

* some people will die, but their hair will not.
* Small consolation, (doesn’t sound to encouraging?
* The point here, as in other places, Don’t be afraid – even if they kill you, your eternal life is safe in God.
* Ultimately their experience of persecution will not end in death, but in victory for their souls.

Note how Eugene Peterson translated this in the Message translation:

**LK 21:18-19 Even so, every detail of your body and soul—even the hairs of your head!—is in my care; nothing of you will be lost. Staying with it—that’s what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry; you’ll be saved. (MSG)**

**To use this passage as a springboard for proclaiming God’s judgmjent on society would miss the point.**

* Rather is passage for today warns us about becoming fixated on temporary human institutions, perhaps with the implication that that we should attend to the poor in our communities instead.
* It exhorts us to be firm in our trust in God when calamity and persecution strike. – and they will.
* Despite its language and imagery of destruction Luke 21:5-19 is ultimately a passage grounded in the HOPE that God remains present in the world and in one’s life even when things have gotten so bad that it feels like the world is closing in on us.
* Imaginw what the 360,000,000 PEOPLE IN THE WORLDWIDE PERSECUTED CHURCH FEEL LIKE EVERY DAY.



**Jesus is telling the disciples (and us) about how to live in a world of paradox where we experience tragedies and blessings.**

* His advice is to persevere, knowing that we won’t be lost or alone because we have a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that cannot be broken.
* As we are told in Acts,

**ACTS 17:28 28For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we, too, are his offspring.’**

Perhaps the questions we should be asking are questions about how we participate with Jesus through every life situation, how we stay close to him during times of trial, how we stay strong when those around us are hurting or are hurting us.

How can we **apply** today’s message to our lives today, What take we take away from this passage we have read.

* **Recognize our tendency to ask the wrong questions.**
	+ When we’re in a scary situation, we want to avoid it, control it, or escape from it.
	+ While it’s important to do what we can in situations like these, we also need to make sure we’re asking the right questions and not giving way to fear.
* **Realize that life is full of paradoxes and that when bad things happen, it isn’t divine judgment.**
	+ Too often Christians beat themselves up when going through difficulties, believing that God is punishing them for some unrepented sin.
	+ Jesus helps us understand in Luke’s passage that bad things also happen to good people
	+ And our role is not to fearfully prepare to outmaneuver any potential catastrophe but to endure with the faith that our God will be with us the whole time.
* **Rest in the embrace of our loving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**
	+ Understand that we are going to be OK, regardless of what happens.

Remember the words that God gave his people in Deuteronomy

**DEUT 31:6 6Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

**Asking questions to get answers is part of being human**.

* Learning to ask the right questions from a position of love rather than fear takes time.
* There’s a lot we don’t know and will never know, especially about the mystery of God.
* As we grow in our faith, we learn to live in this world with the assurance that our God will preserve us through it all.

REMEMBER THE WORDS OF DAVID LIVINGSTONE (the legendary missionary to Africa) He prayed

*Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me.*

*Lay any burden on me, only sustain me.*

*And he testified, “What has sustained me is the promise, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”*

**CLOSING PRAYER**