

16<sup>th</sup> November 2025 – Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost

**Luke 21:5-19**

**WAIT WITHOUT WORRY**

What kind of a waiter are you? Or, to be a little bit more specific about that; what do you do, what approach to you take, when something is going to happen or you are going to do something? Are you a ‘whatever’ waiter; whatever happens happens, no point worrying about it or doing anything, we’ll just deal with stuff as it comes along? Are you a ‘rough idea’ waiter; you’ve thought a bit about what’s coming up, made some basic preparations, so we’ll just see how it will turn out? Or are you a ‘I am *so* ready for this!’ waiter; you’ve gone into the whole situation, trip, or event in detail, found out everything you can, gone through all the things which might happen and planned and prepared for those contingencies also, but, just in case, you spend a lot of time both morning and night going over everything in your head because you might have missed something?

Do any of these types of waiting and getting ready sound like you, or are you a combination of a couple of them, or are you something completely different? If you have a partner in life is that person the opposite to you in these things? I think it is good that we have all of these different kinds of people and approaches, but I confess that I am very much the in-depth, sometimes way overprepared, ‘I am so ready for this’ waiter. I know that it's good for me to sometimes step out of my comfort zone on this, and relax and trust others, which also takes a bit of patience from those I am with. For part of my recent break I went on a motorbike ride with my two oldest and closest friends. For the ride to and from Canberra, which I did alone, I was very prepared and had everything planned out. But for the five days we spent together riding the southern New South Wales coast I made myself be quite happy to just follow along (well, that’s how I remember it!). I wanted to just go with the flow, ‘chill Andrew’ is in the house, which I thought was very trusting of me considering that over the years those two have led me on some questionable journeys and experiences.

How do you prepare, do you prepare, for something you are going to do, or which is going to happen?

And when we are thinking about preparing or getting ready for something, there's a few things we want to know. One of the things right at the top of that list is, 'when?' Think about it, when you receive an invitation what is one of the first things you look for? The date and time when this event is happening. When you are planning a trip for yourself, one of the first things to work out is when you will be going. So much of our preparations revolve around knowing when this thing will happen. One day Jesus is teaching in the temple in Jerusalem, just days before His death on the cross. Although this temple no longer exists, from what we can gather it was a very ornate and beautiful building. As the people were admiring both the beauty of the building itself, and the gifts which had been placed in it, Jesus said, "Do you see these stones? The time is coming when not one of them will be left in place. They will all be knocked down." (v. 6) Naturally, the people's first question was, "Teacher, when will all this happen? How can we know when these things are about to take place?" (v. 7)

But, unfortunately for those of us who like to be on top of everything, Jesus doesn't give an answer to the 'when?' Instead, He tells them, and us, to beware of those who say they can predict when the end will happen. Jesus then goes on to list off the things that will happen before He comes again, and, when we look at it, they are things which have always been happening, and still happen today. We live in the last times, and have been for the past 2,000 years. Last week I said that the early Christians thought Jesus was going to come in their lifetime, but today we are still waiting. But, then again, Jesus coming again will for each of us very likely be when we leave this life. The message here? Hear the warnings, be prepared, but accept that you don't exactly know when these things will occur.

In the words Jesus gives us here, in fact in most of the readings we have at this time of the year, there is a lot of doom and gloom, and if we over focus on just this it's easy to think there is no joy in living a Christian life on earth; it's all hard, suffering persecution and ridicule, and all we can do is focus on a much better life in heaven. The words are a warning, and we know their truth; we read them in history of the past and we both see and experience them ourselves today. Of course, the persecution started with Jesus Himself, who was arrested and put to death just days after He said these words.

But we also know that in the midst of these realities of our world and our lives, which are also full of many blessings and good times, blue skies and calm seas, when we do face the tough things, we also

have hope. We can face challenges in life which are the result of living out our faith in this world; pressure to do what others are doing, anything from gentle teasing to straight out attack because of what we believe, being mocked in the media (I don't know about you, but I tend to cringe a bit whenever anything related to the Christian faith is reported on, it often becomes a negative story). They may not be things which fill our life or define our life, but they very likely will in some way be a part of our life. That's the warning Jesus gives us. In dealing with this reality, Jesus replaces our questions of 'when?' and 'what?', with His command to 'watch out', and His comfort to 'fear not'. In everything we face, with God we can have a hope which allows us to wait without worry.

Where do we find this hope? Well, firstly, we know we often look for it in the wrong places. Jesus begins this teaching by telling people that as beautiful and mighty as the Temple was, it would soon be destroyed; a prediction which came true 40 years later when the Romans flattened Jerusalem after another Jewish revolt. It's not that grand buildings themselves are wrong. The original Temple built by King Solomon in the Old Testament was very large and grand, and built to God's instructions. The problem was when the witness to faith became the object of faith. Do we ever do that? Do we allow our faith and trust in God to be tied up with the building we worship in, or the organisation we are a part of, the service order we use, the hymns or songs we sing, the people we are with, the rules we think it is important that everyone follows? There is nothing wrong with any of these things, like grand buildings they can be a witness to God's love for us and a great aid in worshipping Him. But we need to be careful of allowing our likes and preferences becoming what our faith and hope is based in. Just like the Temple Jesus was standing in when He gave us this teaching, none of these things will last, none of them will ultimately give us the hope we need, but God's love for us will always be there.

Jesus also tells us here that the things which now happen give us a chance to tell others about our faith. And on this, He says, don't worry, God will help you to know what to say. What situations do you have in your life, with family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, to witness to your faith amongst all that happens in the world and in our lives. It doesn't have to be straight out Bible bashing, I don't think anyone wants that, but how can you simply live out your faith as who you are? It might be that after you've known someone for a while something comes up and they say, 'oh, you're a Christian!' Hopefully their surprise

isn't for the wrong reasons, but because a normal, likeable, everyday person can be a Christian; that may not be what they expect. At Christmas time, what does it say to those around you when your celebrations focus on the birth of Jesus and not on those aspects of our celebration which don't bring hope to a world and community which so badly needs it? How can you show and share Jesus in your lives? Don't overthink it, or think you have to be over prepared for it, trust Jesus' assurance for us here that when we are open to Him, He will give us the opportunity to share the hope in Him which everyone needs.

Whatever kind of waiter you might be in other areas of your life, with God we can both know and accept that He has everything in control. With God, as we look towards the things Jesus talks about here and elsewhere, we know it is all done. We can now wait without worry. With some of us that may put us out of our comfort zone, but we know He will never lead us the wrong way. Enjoy the joys and blessings of your life, look to God for help and strength when times are tough or you have worries, and be assured, have a living and certain hope, that through Jesus we know that God is with us in all we go through. Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

- What kind of a waiter are you? Do you take things as they come? Get prepared a bit but happy to go with the flow? Or do you make sure you are well prepared and well covered for any contingency? If you share your life with someone, are they same as you, or the opposite? If you are well prepared, how do you do with sometimes 'letting go' and just following others?
- As you read the warnings Jesus gives here, and the predictions He gives, how do you feel about these things? How do you see them happening? Do you directly experience any of them in your life? Do they sometimes challenge or threaten your faith?
- Just like the people were doing with the Temple, what things, buildings, people, institutions, rituals, etc, can we make the objects of our faith, rather than the witnesses to our faith? Think about how we can do that as groups of people, but also how you might do that sometimes as an individual. If this is something you particularly struggle with, bring it to God in prayer, and, if you need to, talk it over with someone.
- Are there any opportunities God is giving you in your life to witness to Him? Don't overthink how this is done, just be open to Him leading you to witness when and as the opportunity arises.
- Wait without worry. How easy do you find that to do? What are the worries, struggles, doubts around faith, that you have right now? Remember that God sent Jesus to die and rise so you have the assurance of His love and care in all things. Bring to God in prayer anything you are struggling with right now.

Pray: thank God that we know that in Him we have His love in all things. Ask Him to help us to wait without worry as we now live our lives in and for Him.

Pastor Andrew R. Koehler  
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