

**CV-19, 401k, Lk.21:26&28 – Yes, You Read That Right!**

We're certainly living in some very crazy times. First of all, it's a time of very great polarization. We've got scoffers versus climate changers, conservatives versus progressives, right versus left, religious versus Scientifics. And yet it's also a time of great financial uncertainty. If you have a 401K or a 403-B or a 401A or any of those retirement guided devices, you know what fun it's been for the last several years. In 2018 the year ended with all sorts of news about an impending recession. The stock market shed all sorts of value as we were heading into 2019 and it looked like retirement, at least for me personally, was moving from age 67 to about 97. Then 2019 came and the news was the economy is expanding, and we have a booming economy, and all the losses of 2018 were completely overcome, and we ended the year with a huge gain making me think I maybe could retire at age 67. And then we entered 2020 where we were told 'it's a booming economy; expect huge gains, there's no reason this economy is going to stop,' and then coronavirus hit. And we have seen a downturn in the last two weeks that is unprecedented. I think retirement just moved to about 107 for me.

It's also a time of great political uncertainty. Again think over the last four years. Back in 2016, in the presidential election it looked certain that Hillary Clinton was going to win. Every poll had her winning by a landslide and actually president Donald Trump won, and the Republicans swept things, and they owned the White House, the House of Representatives and the Senate. This was quickly followed by calls of presidential improprieties, Russian collusion, a need for impeachment and we began having all sorts of investigations which took us to the year 2017. It was a year of all sorts of investigations and the Congress basically doing nothing as the Democrats said they would not support Trump and as the Republicans said they would not support the president,, and, the Republicans fought among themselves on what they thought they were going to do. Which led to 2018 and the Democratic revival, the loss of the house for the Republicans, as the Democrats took control of it, and now we have well just the same old thing; nothing getting done except a bunch of investigations which came to a head in 2019. As those investigations started coming to an end the Mueller report was released and now there was no smoking gun, yet we had an impeachment that needed to take place immediately for the safety of the country. Right at the end of the year, right at Christmas time, just as those impeachment articles are voted on by the house, it's then decided, well it's not that much of an emergency we can hold on to it for a month or so before we actually repeat it which took us into the year 2020.

The president is impeached we've got presidential primaries going on, a presidential election looming, and in an age of diversity we have 3 old white guys running for the presidential position. One a billionaire who made his money in the stock market and in the business world; and two millionaires who made their money, well as politicians, and working in Washington D.C. A time of political uncertainty, time to financial uncertainty, a polarizing time, we might add very scary times. Along those lines we think of climate change we have heard some politicians tell us that in 10 years civilization will cease to exist as we know it. We have been told climate change is not for the faint of heart because it's too late, we cannot reverse the damage that is done and it's too late to stop the progression. Just last week I heard Nancy Pelosi say that with this next presidential election, civilization hangs in the balance and this is the message of that 17 year old Swedish girl Greta Thornburg; who has spoken out against this climate change because the generations before her have ruined her future.

And its scary times with coronavirus. Literally minutes ago, the director of our day care came in asking me if she would be able to come to work because Sacramento County, where she lives, has gone into lockdown and they are not to leave their homes. This coronavirus is scaring people because the mortality rate is very high among the elderly. Because carriers don't know their carriers many times. Some carriers, especially those people who are young, carry this virus and they never get sick, but they are carriers. Which leads to a nightmare situation young people going to see their grandparents and taking a disease that can kill their grandparents with them.

Scary times, times a political uncertainty, times of financial uncertainty, polarizing times. But this morning, let's add one more list of time to this; prophetic times. When we look at our Gospel reading this morning from Luke chapter 21 beginning at verse 29; we see Jesus telling a very short parable. He said, 'look at the fig tree and all the trees as soon as they come out and leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So, also when you see these things taking place you know that the Kingdom of God is near.'

Let's just take a look at what Jesus is saying. We're in the middle of it right now. Trees are leafing out and when you see those trees start to leaf out, even though this last week here in Lodi has been cooler than normal, wetter than normal our mountains I've received anywhere from 3 to 5 feet of snow; we see those leaves coming out and as Jesus says; we see for ourselves and we know spring is coming. Summer's near. We know this because we are watching, we are seeing it ourselves. We're not taking the word of others, we see those leaves coming out and we know for ourselves; spring, summer is right around the corner.

And what does He make the analogy to? Again, I quote, “when you see these things taking place, you know that the Kingdom of God is near.” The emphasis is on us as individuals. We are to be watching for these things so that we, individually can see and know that the Kingdom of God is near. We're not taking someone else's word for it. We are watching, we are seeing, and the question is what are these things?

Well again in our gospel this morning, Luke chapter 21, Jesus tells us what these things are. They are and I quote: “signs and sun and moon and stars, and on earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves.” Well what's being taught about there or talked about there? I'm going to go out on a line and say as people are looking at the sky and looking at the earth, there is a distress of the nations and they are in perplexity because of what they are seeing. The waring of the sea in waves and stuff; this is climate change. And what comes with climate change? We are seeing the oceans rise, right? We are seeing the temperature rise, right? The ice caps are melting, the intensity of storms is getting worse. We are also experiencing earthquakes. Which, by the way, Jesus mentioned in Luke 21:11. And famines? Well that would be droughts. We are in the middle of one here in California. And listen to this, pestilences. What is a pestilence? A pandemic, a disease that ravages the world. And what is the result of these signs? in the sky on the earth, wherever? The result of Jesus says is this; people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

This last summer there was a climate change conference. I read a story about it. I don't remember the exact number, but there was a high number of calls for medical assistance because people were fainting. That is fainting with fear and with foreboding? Well if you look carefully at the Greek, I think you might find that the definition goes something like this: “quarter mile long lines outside of Costco, waiting to get in and buy as much food as you can possibly do, because you're scared to death you're going to run out of it.” That is foreboding. It's a worry, a deep scare of the future which leads to hoarding, doomsday, survivalist kind of attitudes. In fact, if you look at the news this past week gun sales are at their highest level ever. Why? Because people are afraid, they are foreboding.

Now how does man react to this? Well the government needs to do something. And think of what just that statement right there were saying. It's trust is in the government not God. If we look at the Book of Revelation, which is definitely a challenging book to interpret; but if we look at chapter 13, we see a beast that comes into the into the scene. This beast looks like it has a mortal wound, but it lives. In other words, it mimics Christ. When we see the risen Christ, He has the marks in His hands on His feet, His side or someone who has been killed and yet He lives. And so, this beast looks like a savior, looks like it has the answers to even death. It is so great that people will say, ‘who is like the

beast and who can fight against it? I'd like you to consider just that statement in the Bible. How many times have you yourself felt, or how many times have you heard people say, 'Well you can't fight against the government.'? And what does this beast do? This beast utters blasphemies against God.

I'd like you to think of what our government is saying. It is saying that is OK to kill an unborn baby; a baby that is created in the image of God. It is OK to kill that baby before it is born, right up to the day before it is born. It is a government that tells us marriage between man and man and woman and woman is perfectly OK, which is again the exact opposite of His created order. It is a government that is now telling us that children are too young to determine whether they are a boy or a girl; and yet God has created them as boy and girl. These are blasphemies against God. And the beast is again I quote; "allowed to make war on the Saints." And we are seeing more and more of that as the government's reach extends to the church and tells us how we must operate.

And what comes of this beast? All who dwell on earth will worship it. All were going to look to it for the answers; except those whose name is in the book of life and that would be the Christians dear brothers and sisters. What is the government's reaction to this? A second beast to teach the children. We read that the second beast exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and it is allowed to give breath to the beast. In other words, it is going to point the people to the beast. And I'd like you to just think about something that we saw in our presidential primary recently. Bernie Sanders talking about the goodness of Fidel Castro in Cuba because the first thing he instituted was a literacy program. What was that literacy program? An indoctrination into communism that teaches the children to embrace the government. In China it's called re-education. Revelation 13 ends with the number of the beast, 666. If you've been in a Bible study here at Zion, you know the number six is the number of man in the Bible, and three is the number of God. So, three sixes, it's man before God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is when we worship ourselves as our own savior. And I believe the government is filling that role. I stress the words I believe; it is open to interpretation.

What is our reaction supposed to be? Going back to Luke 21, this is what Jesus says in verse 28. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up, raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. When we see these things that are an indication that Jesus is coming; the fainting, the foreboding, teachings like climate change and Corona virus issues; trust the government an education system that pushes us in that direction. We're not supposed to shake our heads and cower in fear. We are to raise our heads and we are to stand up straight, because we know Jesus is coming. We know our redemption is drawing near and what does that redemption look like?

Get your bibles out and look at Revelation chapter 21, verses 1 through 4. We see the old, what we're used to here on this earth, the twisted earth; the old passes away and the new comes down from heaven. And God speaks and He says behold the dwelling place of God is with man. No longer is it government; it is God. And what is God going to do? This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. He will wipe every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we together journey through this time of anxiety in our world, in our country. Let us go back to the words of our Savior. Let us straighten up and raise our heads knowing our redemption is one day nearer today and knowing that when our Lord returns, every tear is going to be wiped from our eyes we will never see death again. We will never know what mourning is anymore, we will never be crying again, we will not experience pain again, because those are all things that are former. They're part of living in a sin marred world. But when we live with our Savior, in His presence, in the new Kingdom, all that will be gone. And we will be in the glory of our Lord, with all those who have put their faith, hope and trust in Him forever.

In our Savior's name, Amen.