Children’s Sermon – **Divisible by threes.** The Revised Common Lectionary is on a three year rotation. 2022 is Year C and the Gospels generally are taken from Luke. The last time we were in C was 2019. What year were you born? (response was 2013). Did you know that when you were born, we would have used the same scriptures in November that we used today? (Explained how we can figure that out with the rule of threes…a fun math lesson along with learning about the Revised Common Lectionary. **And sermons** – a sermon on sermons. Hmmm…

**Sermon**

In November 1833, a Leonid meteor storm occurred. Recorded at the time: “a tempest of falling stars broke over the earth”; “The night “skies lit up in such spectacular fashion that it signaled to some that Judgement Day was at hand.” Joseph Smith, the founder of the newly established Mormon Church, declared that this was a sign of the End of Times. During this event, if the Revised Common Lectionary were in use, today’s Gospel would have been read. “there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.” Last night, that meteor storm repeated --- much less dramatically.

On September 11, 2001, the Twin Towers in New York collapsed under the assault of a few knife wielding radicals. About six weeks later, today’s Gospel reading was the Sunday text. “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.”

On November 8, 2016, five days before today’s Gospel was read…No, never mind…I better not go there. But I will say of our politicians, “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.”

On November 7, 2022, the mid-term elections were held – and today we read from Luke 21. “Nation will rise against nation (Ukraine-Russia) and kingdom against kingdom (Republican-Democrat-Libertarian); there will be great earthquakes (June – Afghanistan – 230K deaths) and in various places famine (today, 30 million worldwide experiencing severe food insecurity, 10 million in experiencing emergency famine conditions) and plagues (over 6.6 million deaths from COVID-19 with, debatably, still more than 1,000 per day), and there will be dreadful portents (our mid-June floods, almost year round fires, drought, etc.) and great signs from heaven (did I mention Leonid?).”

I warn you; the time for the apocalypse is at hand! You had better get acquainted with Revelation and the Books of the Prophets and Mark 13 and today’s Gospel. To quote Grumpy in Snow White “Mark my words, there’s trouble a brewing!” (I think he also said, “I’ve been tellin’ ya for ten thousand years something bad was about to happen.”)

Yet I am told that New Testament Jews would be throwing up their hands in anticipation. Jesus was promising them that things were about to change. The temple was destroyed in the Roman invasion in 70 C.E. – between ten and thirty years prior to Luke’s Gospel being written. The first Jewish revolt had resulted in ever more aggressive Roman rule. If the end of time were coming, it would have happened when the Temple fell. No, Jesus’ apocalyptic sermon is not intended to strike fear, anxiety, or resignation. It is intended to give hope that the apocalypse brings revelation that those who hold power, those who intimidate and bully, lie and take and dominate and tear down will ‘soon’ be replaced because God is here, God is with us. “Not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

And, to this oftentimes hardship and, more often, blessing, Jesus commends us through today’s Gospel to testify with assurance and confidence, “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 wisdom.” Believe it or not, you have already been given the words and together with your actions, you testify daily.

I read somewhere as I studied to become an LPA that, “There is a sermon (testimony) in each of us.” It pointed to a story that connected. If you have seen the movie, “Walk the Line”, the turning point in Johnny Cash’s career occurred when he and his band were in the Sun Records Recording Studio auditioning for a recording contract. These were apocalyptic times for Cash. He was broke with a heavy mortgage and a troubled marriage. He needed an apocalyptic event.

With somewhat subdued enthusiasm, he and his group start with an old time gospel song by Jimmie Davis, “I was There When It Happened.” Sun Records owner, Sam Philips, breaks in after about thirty seconds, “Hold on. I hate to break in but do you guys have something else? I don’t believe you.”

Cash replies, “You sayin’ I don’t believe in God?”

Philips continues, “We’ve already heard that song. A hundred times. Just like that. Just like how you sang it.”

Cash protests, “Well, you didn’t let us bring it home.”

And here’s the apocalypse, the revelation that changed Cash’s life forever, Philip’s response to the complaint:

“Bring it home? Alright, let’s bring it home. If you was hit by a truck and you was lying out there in that gutter dying, and you had time to sing one song. One song people would remember before you’re dirt. One song that would let God know what you felt about your time here on Earth. One song that would sum you up.You tellin’ me that’s the song you’d sing? That same Jimmy Davis tune we hear on the radio all day, about your peace within, and how it’s real, and how you’re gonna shout it?

Or would you sing somethin’ different? Somethin’ real. Somethin’ you felt.

Cause I’m telling you right now, that’s the kind of song people want to hear. That’s the kind of song that truly saves people. It ain’t got nothin to do with believin’ in God, Mr. Cash. It has to do with believin’ in yourself.”

So Cash wails an original tune, “Folsum Prison Blues”, and walks out with a contract.

That lecture on preaching that I studied suggested replacing ‘song’ in that dialogue with ‘sermon’ and then answer the question Mr. Philips posed, ‘Is that the sermon you’d preach?’

What would yours be? Well, our actions and words are our daily sermons and they truly do show somethin’ different, somethin’ real, somethin’ we feel. I did a Youth’s Sermon at Peace Lutheran several months ago. When I finished, a young boy preached, “That made sense!” I tell you, everyone sat up and started listening. We did our stewardship drive a few weeks ago. One of the commitments was so large that I was truly blown away…a private little sermon of action that inspired me! If I could get that donor to stand up and say, “I did that and it was a joy!”, that would be a sermon! Just like it’s a sermon when a group gathers to celebrate the lives of the departed with food and conversation and tears. Your actions and words are a sermon when you visit The Willows, volunteer at BareTooth Cupboards, knit hats and gloves, share musical talents, mow the lawn (or shovel snow, as the case may be), serve on community boards, give your neighbor a ride, volunteer for flood recovery efforts. I see you preach when you sit patiently through meetings, sharing your insights and time. People are changed, apocalyptically, by your action and example.

Yes, there is a sermon in each of us that gives testimony in the midst of all the chaos in our lives, that gives hope during times of despair, a sermon that gives restoration in times of loss, as sermon that testifies that we will not give up…and God will not give up on us. So what is that ‘one song”, that ‘one sermon in your life? Whatever it may be…believe in yourself and testify it – testify it! For, “By our endurance, we gain our souls.”

Amen