

Until the day we meet the Lord (Luke 21:1-38)

We're studying the gospel of Luke. Today, we will look at cp. 21. The title of the message is "Until the day we meet the Lord."

1-4

¹ As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

One woman out of her poverty put in all she had to live on. What was her heart like? The Bible doesn't record what her heart was like. What we know is Jesus highly valued her act of giving. We can understand her heart was pure when she gave this offering.

Then follows Jesus' teaching in the temple. From here, let's learn what we Christians must be aware of, in these last days where we live and this widow lived.

1. Lead a quiet life

5-9

⁵ Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶ "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." ⁷ "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" ⁸ He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. ⁹ When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

It says "Don't be deceived, don't panic, don't be frightened."

Some people may be deceived by the false claim, "The time is near (v.8)"

and they think "All right then, stop everything and just wait for the Lord." So they no longer work, study nor make effort to improve things. Some people may be afraid, thinking, "I may be destroyed if I stay the way I am." So they stop everything, and just pray and do religious rituals. Others are afraid of the deceiving voice which says, "Offer all your belongings to God. Otherwise, you will receive God's judgment." So they offer all their belongings.

Some people hear the rumor about wars and riots. They go into a panic and no longer work, nor do any tidy up nor cleaning nor fixing, for they think "If there is a war, everything will be in mess. There is no use doing anything." Whatever they hear or see, they think "Oh, no, this is the end." They are filled with fear. More and more they panic, and become restless. They are afraid and think, "If I have money, I may be attacked." Out of fear, they give all they have to live on irresponsibly.

We can think of many cases.

Paul wrote to Thessalonian church to encourage them. They were suffering and facing trials because of their faith. They had more sense of reality about the Lord's second coming than us. The church was confused. (1 Thess 1:6, 2:14, 3:2-4, 3:13, 4:13-5:8) Paul wrote as follows;

1 Thess 4:11

to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands (NASB)

"To lead a quiet life" is explained like this; "said of those who are not running here and there, but stay at home and mind their business," or "to hold one's peace."¹

The modern translations express this verse in this way: "Try your best to live quietly, to mind your own business, and to work hard (CEV), not lying around sponging off your friends (MSG)." "A quiet life" is not just "a life without noise" but "a peaceful life." (VOICE)

The Lord says, "Don't be deceived." "Don't be afraid when you hear about wars or riots." "Don't panic because of the situation". Why?

The Lord will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast.

¹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/hesuchazo.html>

The Lord establishes peace for us. (Isaiah 26:3, 12)

What do you think the widow did after she offered her offering at the temple? The Bible doesn't tell us, so we can only guess. I think she probably went back to her usual life, worked and lived her life quietly and peacefully. From time to time, she might have offered such a bold offering like that day. She was in the peace the Lord establishes.

Lead a quiet life. How can we live a peaceful life in a situation where there is deceiving voices, things that panic us or terrify us?

If we turn our heart to God and spend time with Him until we truly know we are in His hands, we can live a peaceful life. Then we can truly pray to Him from the bottom of our heart, "Lord, my life is in your hands. My food, my clothes and my house is in your hands. You are my God. I am your sheep in your pasture. I will rest in You."

The following of this chapter teaches 3 points which helps us to lead a quiet life until the day we see the Lord face to face.

2. Perseverance

10-19

¹⁰ Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. ¹² "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³ This will result in your being witnesses to them. ¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵ For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ All men will hate you because of me. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By standing firm you will gain life.

In the last days, there will not only be some terrifying events that panic

us. But also those who believe in Jesus will be persecuted because of His name. They will be hated by many because of His name. In the world value, it appears foolish to believe in Jesus. It is a loss in human eyes.

Did the widow in the temple know about it? If she knew about it, would she still give such a bold offering? What do you think? If she had given thinking "God, I have given this much, so please make me wealthy and give me a comfortable life," then when she hears this from Jesus, she would probably ask, "Please give me back that offering."

Just now, we have learned we can live a peaceful life in the Lord. This doesn't mean it is a wealthy, easy and comfortable life we might expect or imagine. I don't mean wealthy, easy, comfortable life is wrong. I also like that kind of life. But the Bible says, "In the last days, those who believe in Jesus will be persecuted because of His name. They will be hated by many because of His name."

In human eyes it is a total loss. Some may think, "How foolish to believe in Jesus. I am gonna quit." Exactly so in human eyes. But from God's perspective, this same event pops up in totally different appearance.

Firstly, it can be an opportunity to testify for the Lord. (13)

They will be caught by people and brought before kings and governors, all because of the name of Jesus. This is really a special case.

Kings and governors are the people we, ordinary people cannot meet usually. If we are given an opportunity to testify our faith before that kind of people publicly, that is a special case. Or if we are given an opportunity to speak about our faith in a place like National religious conference or Congress, that is a special opportunity.

"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." (Acts 5:41) They are the glorious opportunities before God. And they were specially chosen for the opportunity.

14-15

¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵ For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

Here it says don't worry or try to prepare what to say in case you are caught and brought before the authority. Even if you try to think how to ride out the situation, you wouldn't think of very good ideas. When we try to think about it, we tend to think how to compromise our faith and the viewpoint of the world. If we do this, even though we are in an ordinary situation where there is no persecution, we will compromise in our thoughts, action and life and our faith gets weaker and weaker.

When I was a child, in our church, we watched a movie where a Christian was caught and martyred. I don't remember what it was, but I remember I thought "I cannot stand such a painful persecution, so I cannot be a Christian." I think I was pure. I told this to a church leader, and he said, "Martyrdom is a gift. It is given only for those who are specially chosen. God knows your faith. He will not make you do anything you can't do. Don't worry." When I heard this, I was relieved.

When the time comes, the Holy Spirit will tell you what to speak. As we have looked at it, this is about a special case. Because of these words, if you think you don't have to prepare a sermon, that is out of context. Or if you think you don't have to prepare your testimony, how you got saved, encountered Jesus or what God has done for you, that is out of context.

1 Peter 3:14-16

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear ; do not be frightened." ¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Pain is painful. If you are hit, it hurts. If someone says bad things about you, you will be hurt emotionally. If we are suffering for what is right, someone may wonder, "If they give up, they don't have to suffer, but they still do what is right. Even though they suffer for Jesus, they don't abandon Jesus. Why? Who is Jesus whom they believe so much?" That is when people can see Jesus who is our hope and life. If anyone asks us about Jesus who is our hope, then always

give the reason for the hope we have. We should always be prepared for this.

Secondly, it can also be an opportunity to use perseverance and grow.

19

By your perseverance you will secure your lives. (NABRE)

In early Christians hardship because of faith was not optional.

Heb 10:32-36

³² Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ³⁵ So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Different authors write about the same things in different ways. In early Christians hardship because of faith was something they could not avoid. "If you believe in Jesus, every problem will be solved, there will be no trouble nor tears, the life will be comfortable." Nobody would listen to this in those days, including Theophilus. Because they witness with their own eyes that Christians were persecuted because of their faith.

It is not simply that they could bear it because they had hope to go to heaven after death. We nowadays might have that kind of idea, but the hardships early Christians were facing were so severe they couldn't bear it simply by thinking like that. (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-27)

Then why could they persevere the hardships because of faith? What

happened to them?

1 Peter 1:6-8

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

They suffered grief in their trials. But at the same time, they were filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Rom 5:2-3

... And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, ...

The early Christians rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but they also rejoice in their sufferings.

For them, the joy of salvation was that great. They were reconciled with God and their relationship with God was restored. That peace with God brought them such joy! We also want to experience such joy, don't we? We also believe in the same Jesus, the same cross, the same salvation, the same gospel. Do we know that joy of salvation to the extent that we can even rejoice in our sufferings? Do we know Jesus to the degree that we can even rejoice in our trials? How much do we know how wonderful Jesus is? I want to know Jesus like the early Christians knew him. I want to have the same quality joy they had. And I want to share that joy with others.

Rom 5:3-5

³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

There is God's goodness which we can only experience in our hardships.

It is not until we fight the battle that we can experience the might power of God who gives us victory. If all our wishes are quickly granted as we wish, we will probably not seek God earnestly nor expect Him to work great things. We may not even notice that our prayers have become just a form. We never understand He is God, King of kings, and we are just human.

Through sufferings of faith, God draws us closer to him and He reveals himself. Through our fellowship with God, we will grow mature in character, and are made more and more like Jesus.

Our growth as believers has no end. The victory of faith has no limit. God made human in his image. But that was destroyed by sin and Satan. The gospel restores the lost image of God. And by the Holy Spirit, we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. (2 Cor 3:18) This hope does not disappoint us.

Let's keep our perseverance until the day we see the Lord face to face.

3. Conviction of redemption

20-28

²⁰ "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. ²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

One day, the day of destruction will come. There will be great distress in the land God's wrath against this people. Nations will be in anguish and people

will faint from terror.

Then, what about God's people? Do they also faint from anguish, worries and terror? No, we will receive the Lord without fear. We look forward to the Lord's righteous judgment to be done over all the earth. Why can we do it? We can do it because we have the conviction that we are his. For those who have the conviction of redemption, the last judgment day is the day when the Lord comes again to welcome them to His place.

Eph 4:30

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

"A seal" is the sign of ownership, and it shows who is responsible for it. We are sealed with a seal that shows God is our owner. The seal is the Holy Spirit. We can be confident in our redemption because we are given the Holy Spirit.

We are encouraged to pray in the Holy Spirit until the day we meet the Lord. (Eph 6:18)

As we pray in the Holy Spirit, our conviction of redemption will be more and more strengthened. "The Holy Spirit strengthens this impact by connecting the truth of the gospel and our way of life more intimately. This way, He will keep the truth of the gospel in our heart."²

It is essential to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit of God in order to have conviction that we are redeemed by God and we are owned by Him.

"The Holy Spirit is a friend who is always with us whenever, and whatever the situation is. He is the one who can make us experience God's presence vividly. Even when we feel as if we were deserted by others, and feel depressed with sorrow, the Holy Spirit comforts us and cares for us. He can even intervene in the temptation hidden from the eyes of others, which we don't want to share with anyone. And He can give us power to resist the insistent temptations in every situation in life. Sometimes we might wonder, "Is God really listening to my prayer? Does He really know this situation?" In a moment like that,

² James Houston, "Prayer, The Transforming Friendship" (Japanese Translation), Word of Life Press Ministries, 1999, p141

we will experience the care of the Holy Spirit who is in us."³

We will pray in the Holy Spirit until the day we meet the Lord. We will experience that we are redeemed by the Lord and owned by Him. In our fellowship with the Lord, we will become more and more confident in our redemption.

4. Be on guard

29-36

²⁹ He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. ³⁴ "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

It is not that "that day will close on you unexpectedly" because the Lord comes again suddenly without giving any signs. It's not like that. There are signs. The Bible teaches very clearly what kind of signs there will be and how we should be prepared. If we keep these in our mind, we will not be taken by surprise. And we also don't have to be afraid about when it will be.

It is because our hearts are weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life that we will be taken by surprise. It is as if we stepped into a trap and were caught. When we knew it, it was too late.

1 Tim 4:1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

³ Ibid. p145

Satan is waiting for a chance to trap Christians. He is gathering his wits, trying very hard to set a trap for Christians so that they might leave Jesus. He is watching eagerly for a chance to attack Christians. (1 Pet 5:8) Satan doesn't need to attack people who don't believe Jesus, because they are already captured by him. (Eph 2:2) Satan targets Christians. Even though we once believed in Jesus, we shouldn't be off guard.

It is rare for Christians to suddenly stop believing Jesus. In many cases, they drift out a little bit, then a bit more, then a little bit more, and when they know it they have already left Jesus. They lost their faith in Him.

Now, you will get a yellow card, if you think like this. "How close can I come near sin and don't get hurt? How long can I remain under temptation and be okay?" People who think like this might think they are trying to avoid sin and temptation, but actually they want to enjoy sin and they choose to remain under temptation.

It is important to turn away from sin and temptation as soon as you know it. "I guess this is still okay. I will fix this when it is more convenient." If you leave it like this, then it will get more and more serious. You will drift out a little bit, then a bit more, then a little bit more, and when you know it, you have no longer have faith in Jesus.

We will be on guard until the day we meet the Lord.

How can we fight with Satan? How can we have victory over Satan? How can we refuse the temptation? How can we not to lose faith in Jesus?

James 4:7-8

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. ...

What is the key for our victory in our spiritual life? To come near to God. To spend time with God. To hear the voice of God. We need to practice those.

We will be on guard until the day we meet the Lord.

37-38

³⁷ Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to

spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, ³⁸ and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

Our Lord speaks to us every day. He will talk to those who come to him to hear his voice. He prays for us every moment. He keeps us in his mind and intercede for us. (Rom 8:34)

William Blake illustrates our lives in his poem: "We are put on earth a little space, that we may learn to bear the beams of love."⁴

Until the day we meet the Lord face to face, we will fellowship with God, hear His voice, live and experience God's love in His presence. They are what we each do alone as well as do corporately, and our experiences will be shared with others. For us, the day of the Lord's second coming is not like a surprise attack. It is not a terrifying day of judgment. It is the day of completion of faith, joy of victory. It is the day we meet the Lord Jesus we love.

"¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph 3:16-19)

⁴ William Blake, "The Little Black Boy," *Songs of Innocence*, 1789