

November 13, 2022

Celebration / Consecration Sunday

Isaiah 65:17-25

Luke 21:5-19

“Endurance”

1. That’s a cheery Gospel passage for a Baptism Sunday, and a Celebration Sunday!
 - a. I know! The original setting of this Gospel passage is as a warning in anticipation of some pretty terrible and traumatic things.
 - i. It’s no exaggeration to say that their way of life in the city of Jerusalem would be turned completely upside down
 - ii. (some 40 years after Jesus was raised, the Romans destroyed the temple, changing forever the understanding of where and how God would commune with God’s people)
 - iii. I know people who avoid watching the news because it feels overwhelming, it feels impossible to make a difference
 - iv. Being a follower of Jesus, being a faithful child of God is no easy thing.
 - v. The challenges and the struggles are going to be there and at times will seem to pile up.
2. But that is when the reminder in Isaiah and the instructions by Jesus recenter us, not onto each one of us as individuals, but onto God as the center, and onto community.
 - a. In Isaiah God speaks of a reset, birthing a new thing (which, I assume, brings with it some labor pains)
 - b. “I’m creating new heavens and a new earth. All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten. Look ahead with joy. Anticipate what I’m creating.”
 - c. It is God creating, not us. So, this movement centers on God and God’s wisdom and agency.
 - d. And where are we in all of this reset and rebirth? Apparently in the thick of it!
3. Because Jesus says in the gospel that as things are literally falling apart all around us, we will have a front row seat to the madness.

- a. And once again, it is God who is at the center, not asking us to become amazing defenders of the faith overnight, but asking us to trust that it is Jesus who will speak and act through us.
 - b. And not you and me as individuals, but you, me, Levi, and all of us as a resilient team, a team who builds endurance putting in the reps sharing God's love daily without fanfare, putting in the reps softly or loudly calling out for God's justice.
4. This is the place where God has called us to plant ourselves, to invest ourselves, to grow as people and as children of God.
- a. To do the work of God,
 - b. not as one person trying to shoulder the entire responsibility for ushering in the Realm of God, but in commitment together,
 - c. in an enduring team who celebrates being centered in God,
 - d. even when we don't know what challenges tomorrow will bring, or what unhealthy system will fight us tooth and nail when we are part of God's effort to dismantle it and birth something new.
 - e. A day like today, with scriptures like what we read, with a baptism that reminds us of new life in Jesus, and a stewardship campaign gathering financial and human resources for our 199th year of ministry together,
 - i. a day like today is a celebration of who we are and what we're called to be.
 - ii. It's a day not to shy away from the challenges which will come.
 - iii. It's a day to lean into our trust in who Jesus is, and how Jesus showed us to be faithful children of God.

Reflection questions

1. Share a story of a time when you felt "God put words in your mouth" right when you needed them.
2. In Luke 21:5-19, Jesus tells people to expect great destruction and distress. What scares you about these scenarios and what gives you hope?