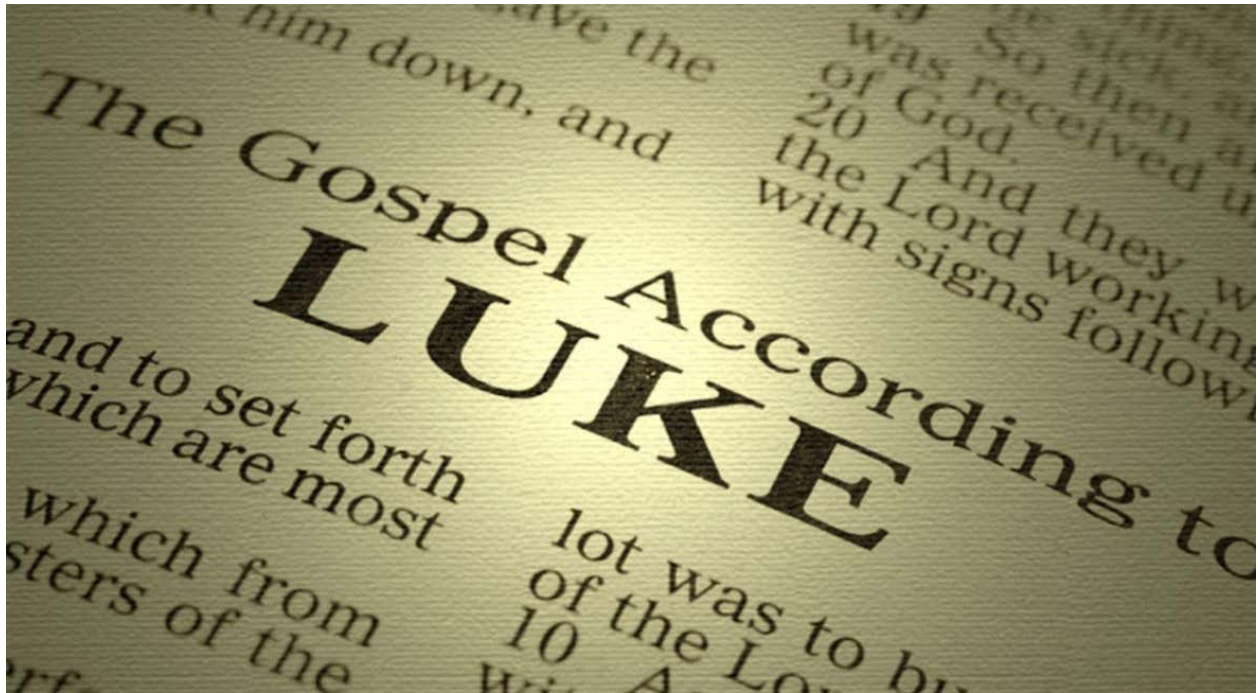


# Luke 21



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Luke 21

Copyright 2023 T. M. and Susie Moore

The Fellowship of Ailbe

[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

Except as indicated, all Scripture are taken from the *New King James Version*. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All quotations from the early Church Fathers are from *Luke: Ancient Christian Commentary Series, New Testament III*, Arthur A. Just, Jr., ed., General Editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003) or *Luke: Reformation Commentary on Scripture New Testament IV*, Craig S. Farmer, ed., Timothy George, general ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014). All quotes from John Calvin are from *Commentary on Luke*, Rev. John Pringle, tr. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translational Society). All quotations from Matthew Henry are from *Matthew Henry Concise Commentary*, E-text version Copyright 1996, 2002 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All quotes from Earl Radmacher are from *The NKJV Study Bible*, copyright ©1997, 2007 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All psalms for singing are from *The Ailbe Psalter* (Williston: Waxed Tablet Publications, 2006), available by [clicking here](#).

Cover art: Yahoo images

## Introduction to Luke 21

We need to watch where we're going in life, so that our walk follows in the footsteps of Jesus and our path points beyond this world to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

Jesus took great pains to tell us as much as we need to know about the course of history unto the time of His return. A variety of "signs" will, like road signs counting down the miles to your destination, keep us assured that we're on the right track and making progress toward our goal.

As we see those signs we should look up to the Lord, knowing that His coming will be sudden and seeking His help to make sure we are ready for His return. As we look ahead to His coming, we have His Word that we will be "counted worthy" to stand before Him without fear, so long as our lives in the present reflect the end toward which we constantly look.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study of the gospel of Luke instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 The Faithful Widow

*Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.*

Those who trust in the LORD  
Are like Mount Zion,  
Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.  
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
So the LORD surrounds His people  
From this time forth and forever.

*Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.*

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)  
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!  
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!  
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,  
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

*Refrain, v. 1*

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!  
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

*Read and meditate on Luke 21.1-4.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the widow give?
2. How did Jesus respond to her gift?

*Meditation*

Do you suppose that, at Luke 20.47, Jesus knew this widow was coming toward the treasury with her gift in hand? Chapter 21 begins with a graphic illustration and contrast of the difference between sham religion and genuine faithfulness.

The scribes, whom Jesus has just roundly exposed and warned the people against, were standing right there with Jesus as this widow approached. They saw her deposit her “two mites” (v. 2), which was “all the livelihood that she had” (v. 4). They heard Jesus commend her faithfulness, which they would not have noticed, amid all the lavish giving of the “the rich” (v. 1) unless Jesus had pointed it out. Surely, at least some of those scribes must have been deeply shamed.

Was the widow acting foolishly? Didn't she know these nattily-dressed and well-fed religious bullies were taking advantage of her and everyone else? She probably did. But their sin was *their* problem. What God required of her, she would not fail to fulfill. She gave her last penny to the Lord, a token of her love for Him and her complete trust in His love and provision for her. Her meager gift was “more than all”, Jesus reckoned (v. 3), because she gave obediently, out of the sincerity of her faith.

We have “two mites” to give to the Lord, as Matthew Henry explained: our soul and our body. We must give them entirely to Him, day by day, offering ourselves as living sacrifices to the Lord (Rom. 12.1, 2) and seeking to glorify Him in even the smallest details of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31). Give everything to Jesus and you'll always have everything you need.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*

“Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is

really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day” (1 Tim. 5.3-5).

Jesus referred to this dear woman as “a certain poor widow” (Lk. 21.2), so she must’ve been a real widow. A woman without children or grandchildren alive to care for her, who was trusting in God, and spending much time in prayer. She would also have had to fulfill some qualifications: over sixty years of age, the wife of one man at a time, well reported for good works which consisted of raising children, lodging guests, caring for the saints of God, relieving the needs of the afflicted, and diligently following every good work (1 Tim. 5.9, 10).

The temple leadership should have been caring for this woman. I fear that they were not, because she was deemed to be so poor that she only had two mites left to her name.

This was something that the New Testament Church did do. In fact, the proper care for widows is what brought about the commissioning of the first deacons (Acts 6.1-7).

So this passage in Luke 21.1-4 might have been seen more as a descriptive reenactment of the wicked scribes “who devour widows’ houses” than about the noble giving practices of the poor. Jesus’ ministry worked that way. He would teach something, or tell a parable, and then right afterward a real-life example would occur; to impress upon His followers what He was talking about.

So many things that were wrong with the former religious way of life, Jesus made sure to remedy in His plans for the Church. Does your church care for its widows?

Jesus set up many wonderful guidelines for His Church—that Church against which the gates of hell will not be able to prevail. The Church built solely on the premise that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16.16-19). And that Church in which we become citizens of His Kingdom, and we live for His glory. In that Church widows will not suffer but will be cared for with the utmost tenderness. And there will not be leaders who devour anyone’s house for their own gain. A loving adherence to the Law of God will be taught and lived out in love (Matt. 22.37-40). And this Church will be “the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48.2).

That is Jesus’ Plan for His Church. Are we following His guidelines, or are we merely making things up as we go? To suit our own plans? Or notions? Or whatever makes us feel good? Or accepted, or with the times? Just like the scribes. Please, no.

For the truth is: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13.8).

*For reflection*

1. How can you know what God is calling you to do in serving Him?
2. What should we do if we discover that our churches are not following the plan Jesus has revealed for us?
3. What does it mean for you to be a “living sacrifice” for Jesus?

*Blessed Lord! the poorest of thy servants have two mites, they have a soul and a body; persuade and enable us to offer both unto thee; how happy shall we be in thine accepting of them!* Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Luke 21.1-4*

*Pray Psalm 125.3-5.*

Thank the Lord for His faithfulness to you, day by day. Pray that He will make you faithful in all the everyday details of your life.

*Sing Psalm 125.3-5, 1.*

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

Wickedness shall rest not on this holy land.

Sinfulness shall never come forth from their hand.

Trusting in the Savior, firm in His caress,

Ever shall His favor on this holy city rest.

*Refrain, v. 1*

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Lord, do good and care for those upright in heart.

All who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase, on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

*Refrain*

## 2 By Your Patience

*Pray Psalm 52.1, 2.*

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?  
The goodness of God *endures* continually.  
Your tongue devises destruction,  
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

*Sing Psalm 52.1, 2.*

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Why do the mighty boast in sin? God's love endures, it knows no end!  
They with their tongues vain boasts repeat, and like a razor, work deceit.

*Read Luke 21.1-19; meditate on verses 5-19.*

*Preparation*

1. How will the lost world respond to those who believe in Jesus?
2. How must we prepare for this?

*Meditation*

The problem of religion in Jesus' day was the same as in every generation: It becomes merely superficial. We are too easily distracted by externals, which then become the focus and measure of our faith. "Look at this beautiful temple" (v. 5) or this handsome megachurch, that fine worship band, those cool youth groups, that fascinating preacher.

Jesus shows us that all such religion will go the way of the temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans and has not been rebuilt. Throughout the ages of the last days—the days in which we are currently living—many have appeared on the scene claiming to speak for Jesus (v. 8). They are especially deceitful and to be avoided who claim to have secret information about when Jesus will return. He has told us we may not know this (Acts 1.7); thus, any who claim they do are profit-seeking false prophets. Pay them no heed.

You'll know we're in the last days when wars and commotions and international conflicts, together with all manner of catastrophic natural disasters, are ongoing (vv. 9-11). An even more telling sign will be that the world will hate the followers of Christ and will persecute us in various ways (v. 12), thus providing us with many excellent opportunities to bear witness to Jesus (v. 13).

This is nothing to worry about; we shouldn't even have to prepare for it. Jesus Himself will give us words to bear witness that even our adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist (vv. 14, 15). We need to be patient, that is, looking to Jesus and ready to endure hardship, opposition, scorn, and worse (vv. 16-19). But we can keep our souls strong and unyielding if we remember the words of Jesus and cling to His Presence (Matt. 28.20) and promises (2 Pet. 1.4).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

In the same, and beautiful way that antiphonal singing occurs,  
Luke 21.5-19 should be read with 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11.

The apostle Paul explained responsively Jesus' heartfelt words about our future:

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren,  
you have no need that I should write to you.

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord  
so comes as a thief in the night.  
For when they say, 'Peace and safety!'  
then sudden destruction comes upon them,  
as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.  
And they shall not escape.  
But you, brethren, are not in darkness,  
so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.  
You are all sons of light and sons of the day.  
We are not of the night nor of darkness.  
Therefore let us not sleep, as others do,  
but let us watch and be sober.  
For those who sleep, sleep at night,  
and those who get drunk are drunk at night.  
But let us who are of the day be sober,  
putting on the breastplate of faith and love,  
and as a helmet the hope of salvation.  
For God did not appoint us to wrath,  
but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who died for us,  
that whether we wake or sleep,  
we should live together with Him.  
Therefore comfort each other  
and edify one another,  
just as you also are doing.”

Knowing this brings comfort and patience into our souls.  
And through this patience we will possess the peace that comes  
in knowing we belong to God here and now, and there and then.  
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by your name;  
you are Mine” (Is. 43.1)

*For reflection*

1. The “last days” can be difficult for believers, even dangerous. How should you prepare each day for working your Personal Mission Field?
2. Other believers are struggling to be faithful, even believers you know. Whom will you comfort and encourage today?
3. How would you explain to a new believer what it is to know the peace that comes from “knowing we belong to God here and now, and there and then”? What is that peace like? How can we know it?

*Christ commands that we instead pursue this care of our lives—that we should always walk exposed to death “through fire and water” and sword. And certainly, no one will really place his soul in God’s hand except for one who has learned to live in the moment, always prepared to die. In sum, Christ orders us to possess our lives both under the cross and among the continual terrors of death. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels 15*

*Pray Psalm 52.3-9.*

Pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field. Ask God to give them a heart for Him, to know, love, and serve Him. Prepare for today’s work in your Personal Mission Field by offering yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

*Sing Psalm 52.3-9.*

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Men more than good in evil delight, and lies prefer to what is right.  
They utter words, both harsh and strong, with their devouring, deceitful tongue.

God will forever break them down, uproot, and cast them to the ground!  
He from their safety tears them away, no more to know the light of day.

The righteous see and laugh and fear, and say, "Behold, what have we here?  
Such are all who at God conspire, and wealth and evil ways desire."

But as for me may I be seen in God an olive ever green!  
Ever in God, most kind and just, shall I with joy and gladness trust!

Thanks evermore to our Savior be raised! His faithfulness be ever praised!  
Here with Your people, loving God, I wait upon Your Name, so good!

### 3 Judgment of the Sham

*Pray Psalm 118.1-6.*

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!  
For His mercy *endures* forever.  
Let Israel now say,  
“His mercy *endures* forever.”  
Let the house of Aaron now say,  
“His mercy *endures* forever.”  
Let those who fear the LORD now say,  
“His mercy *endures* forever.”  
I called on the LORD in distress;  
The LORD answered me *and set me* in a broad place.  
The LORD is on my side;  
I will not fear.  
What can man do to me?

*Sing Psalm 118.1-6.*

(St. George’s Windsor: *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)  
Thank the Lord, His love endures! All to whom His love is sure,  
all who fear Him day by day, let them thanks and praise now say!  
Out of my distress I cry; He will hear me from on high.  
He will free me from all fear. What can man do to me here?

*Read Luke 21.1-24; meditate on verses 20-24.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Jesus say would happen to Jerusalem?
2. What would be the sign this was about to happen?

*Meditation*

What the religious leaders of Jesus’ day feared most was that the Romans would come and take away their privileged place and their nation (Jn. 11.48). They feared that Jesus would be the cause of this disaster, so they put Him to death on the cross.

But what they feared would certainly come to pass. In 70 AD Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, dispersing the population and effectively discontinuing the nation of Israel for nearly 2,000 years.

This is what Jesus prophesied in our passage for today. But notice how God worked to make sure everyone understood it was not because of Jesus that this destruction ensued. First, what Jesus prophesied would occur some forty years after His ascension to heaven. By then, the Jews and Romans would have driven most of the Christians out of Jerusalem (Acts 8.1), were seeking to murder the leadership that remained (Acts 12.1-4), and effectively made it necessary for Christians in Jerusalem to go underground. They were determined to stamp out the Name and people of Jesus, and for the most part, they succeeded.

So it wasn’t because of Him that judgment came upon Jerusalem and the Jewish people. As God had done many times over in the Old Testament, He showed His displeasure against Israel through the brutality of a foreign power, trampling down their city and temple and dispersing their people to the far parts of the empire. The lesson for us? God hates sham religion.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“When you see...then know...” (Lk. 21.20).

Do you see anything sham-full about the church today?  
Do you sense pretended piety in yourself?  
Do you believe it when you are told “there’s nothing to see here”?  
That “all is well because we say so, and we’re having fun. Right?”  
“God’s law is so cumbersome, and isn’t it all about grace?”  
“Grace that allows us to do and think whatever is pleasing to us?”  
If you see it, and are tired of it in others and yourself, do you ever wonder:  
Does God see and know about our sham religion too? And if He does:  
How long do you think He will wait to do to something about it?  
In the meantime, Is there anything we can do about it?

Well, I’m glad you asked. Yes, there is! God says:

“*If* My people who are called by My name  
will humble themselves  
and pray  
and seek My face,  
and turn from their wicked ways,  
*Then* I will hear from heaven,  
and will forgive their sin  
and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7.14).

But it’s that *If, Then* clause that is the bugaboo.

You mean I have to do something about it?

I need to change?

I need to be humble before God?

I need to pray and seek God?

I need to turn from my wicked ways?

Wait, you mean I have to stop pointing my finger at other people, and change my own ways?

I need to follow Your Law? Me? What about them? Those people? Those sinners?

“God, be merciful to *me* a sinner!” (Lk. 18.13)

God told Samuel to say to the people:

“*If* you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods...from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only...[*then*] He will deliver you...” (1 Sam. 7.3).

Indeed, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14.34).

Beware. If we see and know, then surely God also sees and knows.

Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. *If* anyone hears My voice and opens the door, [*then*]

I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3.19-22).

*If* we repent, *then* we don’t need to fall under “The Judgment of the Sham”.

*For reflection*

1. What is repentance? When is repentance necessary?

2. God hates sham religion. How can we know when we are practicing or encouraging sham religion?

3. What can you do, day by day, to keep your faith from drifting into sham?

*Having given an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next to come, Christ shows what all those things would end in, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation... So fully did the Divine judgments come upon the Jews, that their city is set as an example before us, to show that sins will not pass unpunished; and that the terrors of the Lord, and his threatenings against impenitent sinners, will all come to pass, even as his word was true, and his wrath great upon Jerusalem. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Luke 21.20-24**

*Pray Psalm 118.19-29.*

Call on the Lord to purge you of any insincerity of faith, any sham religion or false beliefs that keep you from knowing, loving, and serving Him.

*Sing Psalm 118.19-29.*

(St. George's Windsor: *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!

Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.

Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!

God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

Blessed are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.

God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.

Praise and thanks to You, O Lord; we extol Your holy Word!

Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

## 4 The Coming of the Son of Man

*Pray Psalm 96.1-4.*

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!  
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;  
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.  
Declare His glory among the nations,  
His wonders among all peoples.  
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised;  
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

*Sing Psalm 96.1-4.*

(Mit Freuden Zart: *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!  
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!  
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised.  
Fear Him, and sing His glory!

*Read Luke 21.1-28; meditate on verses 25-28.*

*Preparation*

1. What will happen just before the Lord returns?
2. How should Jesus' followers respond when they see this?

*Meditation*

Jesus had already told His disciples that, in the last days, many would come claiming to be Him (v. 8). But these would all be all false christs. When Jesus returns to gather His followers unto Himself, there will be no doubt that He has come again. Every eye will see Him as He comes in the cloud (v. 27).

His return will be announced with cosmic portents—strange signs suddenly appearing in the sun, moon, and stars (v. 25). Peter says the Lord, returning unexpectedly, will burn up the vast cosmos in a great conflagration (2 Pet. 3.10-12). The world will be pitched into distress and perplexity, and the seas and oceans will roar violently over all the earth (v. 25). So terrifying will these cataclysms be that men will be overcome with fear (v. 26).

But the followers of Christ need not fear. Instead, they must look up expectantly, anticipating the joy that will soon be theirs as they see Jesus coming in a cloud with glory (vv. 27, 28). His return means the final act in our redemption will have begun, when, because we shall see Him as He is, we will be like Him (1 Jn. 3.1, 2), and we will dwell together with Him in a “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3.13).

The signs of our living in the last days have been with us since the destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 9-24). These should not cause us to live in fear, but in hope, as we daily look up to Jesus, calling on Him to “Come quickly!” (Rev. 22.17, 20), living righteous and pure lives (2 Pet. 3.11, 14; 1 Jn. 3.3), and knowing that the unravelling of the world and the collapse of the cosmos—whenever these may occur—means that the eternal covenant of God is shortly to be fully realized (Rev. 1.1).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“When Jesus returns to gather His followers unto Himself, there will be no doubt that He has come again. Every eye will see Him...”

Please note that when this occurs, we will have moved from the *If, Then* to the definitive *Then, When*. “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen...your redemption is near” (Lk. 21.27, 28). All bets are off. It is the Grand Finale. The anticipated Happening is happening, when the Son of Man appears, Jesus by Name, and every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2.9-11).

Then, every opportunity given us to “to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3.18) for our own benefit, and for the benefit of those in our Personal Mission Field is over. We must, until then, have the same mind as those who were rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, “for the people had a mind to work” (Neh. 4.6). Our work is eternal, as we are seeking to rebuild souls, not walls. This is God’s Word and work that we are participating in, “For we are God’s fellow workers...” (1 Cor. 3.9).

“For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth” (Ps. 33.4).

As Jesus said, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work” (Jn. 9.4).

Although we cannot know exactly *when* He is returning, we know for sure *that* He is returning, and that we have only so much time to accomplish the work that we have each been called to do in His Kingdom on earth, in preparation for His eternal Kingdom in the new heavens and earth. So, let’s get our minds set and do it!

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15.58).

*For reflection*

1. How should Jesus’ coming again affect the way you work your Personal Mission Field?
2. How can knowing that Jesus is coming again be a means of encouragement to our fellow Christians?
3. How should the fact of Jesus’ return factor into our sharing the Good News of Christ?

*When Christ comes in judgment, it shall be shown here by wonders in the heavens, the earth and the sea, which shall be like harbingers of that dreadful and terrible day.* John Boys (1571-1625), *The Second Sunday in Advent 22*

*Pray Psalm 96.11-13.*

Give thanks to Jesus for His promise to return and take us unto Himself. Pray that He will come quickly.

*Sing Psalm 96.11-13.*

(Mit Freuden Zart: *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!

Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly  
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.

He comes; exalt Him greatly!

## 5 The Enduring Word

*Pray Psalm 119.49, 50.*

Remember the word to Your servant,  
Upon which You have caused me to hope.  
This *is* my comfort in my affliction,  
For Your word has given me life.

*Sing Psalm 119.49, 50.*

(Wycliff: *All for Jesus*)

Lord, remember all the good Word You have spoken unto me!  
For I ever hope in You, Lord as I serve You joyfully.

This my comfort in affliction, this my comfort in all strife:  
that Your Word is my redemption, giving me eternal life!

*Read Luke 21.1-33; meditate on verses 29-33.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Jesus say about the fig tree?
2. What did He say about His words?

*Meditation*

The patterns of creation are reliable. The seasons come and go, and we know what to expect with each one. When the fig tree starts to bud, summer is near. And when the signs of the times begin to be in evidence, know that the Kingdom of God is at hand (vv. 30, 31).

Why is the creation so predictable? Does it run on automatic pilot? Are the “laws” of physics sovereign in the workings of creation? No. These “laws” are but descriptions of how the eternal Word of God upholds, sustains, manages, and arranges every detail of created life (cf. Ps. 104; Heb. 1.3). As Jonathan Edwards explained, “It is by the immediate influence of God upon things according to those constant methods which we call the laws of nature, that they are ever obedient to man’s will, or that he can use them at all” (*An Humble Attempt*).

Since the Word of God is all-comprehensive and all-powerful over all aspects of the creation, we can believe that what Jesus spoke concerning the last days and the signs of His appearing will be just as reliable and certain (v. 31). Creation continues as it does because Jesus speaks continuously to it according to His purposes and will. A day is coming when He will speak this old, sinful world into oblivion and speak a new one into existence (v. 33). Since we see the signs indicating the Kingdom has come, we prepare for the day of its full and final coming by devoting ourselves to seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God. All the words Jesus has spoken about His Kingdom will endure, even once heaven and earth have passed away.

Cling to those words and live by them. He Who speaks them will never fail you nor forsake you.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

God’s words are always reliable and true.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...  
Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Gen. 1.1, 3).

Is there light today? Does the sun still shine? Is God’s word true and reliable? Yes, it is.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia...” (Ezra 1.1).

Was Cyrus a real person? Did he end the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites as predicted? Is God’s word true and reliable? Yes, it is.

Jesus said to His disciples, “we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Lk. 18.31-33).

Was Jesus mocked and insulted and spit on? Was He killed? Was He raised from the dead three days later? Is God’s word true and reliable? Yes, it is.

“When you see these things happening”—bad things to the creation and the created—“know that the kingdom of God is near” (Lk. 21.31).

Did God say that this will happen? Do you believe Him? Yes, I do.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Lk. 21.33).

Jesus said that. I believe Him because His words are always reliable and true. Yes, they always are.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40.8).

“Now this is the word by which the gospel was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1.25).

Jesus said, “...if it were not so, I would have told you...” (Jn. 14.2).

Yes, He would, because His Word is always reliable and true.

*For reflection*

1. How should knowing God’s Word is reliable and true encourage us in reading and studying it?

2. How have you experienced the fact that God’s Word is reliable and true?

3. How will you “look for” (Bullinger) the coming of God’s Kingdom today?

*[W]hen we know that many of those things of which the Lord has spoken come to pass, we ought to acknowledge that the kingdom of God and the Day of the Lord is already at the door and that therefore we should look for it by diligently working to form ourselves in godliness and virtue. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), An Ecclesiasticall Exposition upon Saint Mathewe 23.29*

*Pray Psalm 119.51-56.*

Commit your way to the Lord. Preview your day and ask the Lord to shine the light of His Word on everything you do and say. Ask Him for courage to serve Him faithfully and well.

*Sing Psalm 119.51-56.*

(Wycliff: *All for Jesus*)

Though the proud deride and taunt me, I will trust Your faithful Word.

Let Your judgments from of old be all my comfort, holy Lord.

*Luke 21*

Indignation grips me, Savior, for those who forsake Your Word.  
All Your statutes, all Your favor, I will sing with joy, O Lord!

In the night Your Name attends me, and I keep Your holy Word;  
let Your precepts all befriend me, as I keep them, glorious Lord.

## 6 Watch and Pray

*Pray Psalm 55.16-19.*

As for me, I will call upon God,  
And the LORD shall save me.  
Evening and morning and at noon  
I will pray, and cry aloud,  
And He shall hear my voice.  
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me,  
For there were many against me.  
God will hear, and afflict them,  
Even He who abides from of old.

*Sing Psalm 55.16-19.*

(Bread of Life: *Break Thou the Bread of Life*)  
Lord, I will call on You, answer and save!  
Noon, morning, evening too, my voice I raise.  
Grant me Your peace, O Lord; answer my foes!  
All who reject God's Word He overthrows.

*Read Luke 21.1-38; meditate on verses 34-38.*

*Preparation*

1. For what did Jesus instruct us to “watch” and “take heed”?
2. When should we pray?

*Meditation*

Jesus has been unfolding a scenario of increasing wickedness, confusion, uncertainty, unbelief, and fear. But all this will culminate and conclude when the Lord returns to gather and take His people unto Himself forever. As we await that day, we must be active in preparing for it, especially in making sure that none of the sinfulness of the world finds a home in our soul.

To that end, we must “take heed” and “watch” over our lives (vv. 34, 36), lingering in prayer before the Lord as we call on Him to search us and reveal to us any wicked ways lurking in the depths of our soul (Ps. 139.23, 24). And we must watch carefully over what we allow into our soul, so that we may think with the mind of Jesus (1 Cor. 2.16), love with the new heart God's Spirit provides (Ezek. 36.26, 27), and value only those priorities that Jesus commands (Matt. 6.33; 1 Cor. 10.31).

When Jesus returns, the sinful world will be snatched up as in a sprung snare (v. 35); but we will escape if, through constant watchfulness and prayer, we are found to be diligent in making our calling and election sure (v. 36; cf. 2 Pet. 1.5-11). This is a daily calling and journey. Let us begin each day in God's Word, listening as He speaks to our soul and directs us in seeing Jesus. Let us be like those multitudes who gathered to hear Jesus day by day in the temple (vv. 37, 38). Then let us be watchful throughout the day, praying at all times and not growing weary of seeking the Lord and His Kingdom and righteousness.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Jesus began this discussion with people who seemed to be sincerely seeking the truth about the unfolding of the Kingdom of God—His disciples included. During this discussion He: lambasted the scribes for their hypocrisy and cruelty (Lk. 20.46-21.4); predicted the destruction of the temple and the appearance of false prophets (Lk. 21.5-9); warned of weather events, fearful sights, great heavenly signs, and persecution (Lk.

21.11, 12); comforted His followers that all these things will be an opportunity for testimony and that the words for those occasions will be given by the Lord Jesus Himself (Lk. 21.13-26). Then He said that the end, not just an end, but The End with an attached redemption for His believers, was near (Lk. 21.27, 28), and offered some timeframe hints but not the exact time of His return (Lk. 21.29-33).

Then came these harder words—straight at His listeners and disciples; and now to us. “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down” with concern for the salvation of those in your Personal Mission Field? For the unsaved all across the globe? For the down-trodden?

Nope. None of the above.

Jesus suspects that we might be weighed down with “carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Lk. 21.34). He is concerned that His return will catch us off-guard and “unexpectedly” (Lk. 21.34). How disheartening for Him that He knows us so well. And unsettling for us, that He knows us so well.

But because He loves us and wants the best for us, He declared that there is a better way. There is an *Instead of That How About This* remedy: “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk. 21.36).

Here's a suggestion from God's reliable and true word:

1. Do not enter the path of the wicked. Do not walk in the way of evil.
  2. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on.
  3. Give attention to God's words. All of them.
  4. Do not let His teaching depart from your mind or life.
  5. Keep God's teaching in the middle of your mind and heart.
  6. Keep your heart pure with all diligence. Be vigilant.
- For out of your heart spring the issues of life. All of them.  
(Proverbs 4)

Clearly Jesus knows all of this. That is why He is warning us to follow His path and not be weighed down following another way. His way is the best way, for “the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” The weighty way, the way of the wicked, is like darkness; and sadly, they don't even know what makes them stumble (Prov. 4.18).

We do not ever want to stumble and miss that glorious Day when our Beloved Savior returns.

Best suggestion ever? “Watch and Pray”.

*For reflection*

1. How could you conduct an effective and ongoing self-watch?
2. Why is it important that you do so?
3. How can believers encourage one another in maintaining this “watch and pray” discipline?

*Watch therefore, and pray always. Watch against sin; watch in every duty, and make the most of every opportunity to do good. Pray always: those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, who live a life of prayer in this world.*  
Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Luke 21.34-38*

*Pray Psalm 55.1-3, 20-23.*

Spread your day before the Lord in prayer. Commit all your work to Him. Call on Him to give you strength

and grace, and cast all your concerns and burdens onto Him. Give thanks and praise, and prepare to watch and pray throughout the day.

*Sing Psalm 55.1-3, 20-23.*

(Bread of Life: *Break Thou the Bread of Life*)

Hear now my prayer, O Lord, hide not from me.

Answer me by Your Word and set me free!

Wicked men sore oppress; restless am I.

Lord, ease my soul's distress and hear my cry!

Many assail, O Lord, many betray.

See how they draw their sword across my way.

Take up my burden, Lord; strengthen and bless!

Let judgment by Your Word their souls distress.

## 7 End in Sight

*Pray Psalm 22.23-25.*

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,  
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;  
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;  
But when He cried to Him, He heard.  
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;  
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

*Sing Psalm 22.23-25.*

(Darwall: *Rejoice, the Lord Is King*)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!  
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!  
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,  
nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.  
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

*Read Luke 21.1-38; meditate on verses 25-28.*

*Preparation*

1. What “signs” did Jesus tell us to mark?
2. To what do those “signs” point?

*Meditation*

“Watch where you’re going!” Did your mom ever yell that to you after you had walked into a wall, knocked over a plant while running through the house, or tripped on a rug? It’s good advice for every stage of our lives. Especially for us who believe in Jesus, because we *know* where history and our lives are going. We *know* what lies ahead for us beyond this old world. And we *know* how we must prepare for those final events that will usher in the new creation.

Jesus took great pains to tell us as much as we need to know about the course of history unto the time of His return. A variety of “signs” (v. 25) will, like road signs counting down the miles to your destination, keep us assured that we’re on the right track and making progress toward our goal. As we see those signs we should look up to the Lord, knowing that His coming will be sudden and seeking His help to make sure we are ready for His return (vv. 28, 34-36). As we look ahead to His coming, we have His Word (v. 33) that we will be “counted worthy” to stand before Him without fear, so long as our lives in the present reflect the end toward which we constantly look (v. 36).

We need to watch where we’re going in life, so that our walk follows in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Jn. 2.1-6) and our path points beyond this world to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

The Christian makes progress in the Kingdom by looking in four directions at once: Up, to see the Lord in glory. Back, to remember all He has said and done. Ahead, to keep focused on where we’re going. And around, so that each step contributes to our preparation for seeing Jesus and being like Him. The Christian’s

vantage point on life points toward the return of the Lord. If we see that clearly and long for it earnestly, watching and praying with all vigilance (v. 36), then we will have no fear when we see Jesus breaking through the clouds in glorious triumph.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Surely the time is getting closer for Jesus' powerful and glorious return. Oh, how we long for that Day.

God's people have been looking forward to this Event for a long time. Daniel, in the first year of Belshazzar's reign in Babylon, had a dream and visions in his head while on his bed. This is part of what he saw:

"I was watching in the night visions, and behold,  
One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!  
He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.  
Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away,  
and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7.13, 14).

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke  
in time past to the fathers by the prophets,  
has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,  
Whom He has appointed heir of all things,  
through Whom He made the worlds;  
Who being the brightness of His glory  
and the express image of His person,  
and upholding all things by the word of His power,  
when He had by Himself purged our sins,  
sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Heb. 1.1-3).

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud  
with power and great glory...the kingdom of God is near" (Lk. 21.27, 31).

"The Christian's vantage point on life points toward the return of the Lord. If we see that clearly and long for it earnestly, watching and praying with all vigilance, then we will have no fear when we see Jesus breaking through the clouds in glorious triumph."

With this end in sight, we will say with Paul: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4.8).

*For reflection*

1. Do you think about or meditate on the return of Jesus? Explain.
2. Why is it important that Christians "keep the end in sight" of this earthly life?
3. What "signs" do you observe that tell you we're right on track with Jesus' Word?

*The cosmic signs and earthly chaos are indications that the decisive and consummate rule of God is approaching.* Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), *NKJV Study Bible Note on Luke 21.31*

*Pray Psalm 22.26-28.*

Ask the Lord to give you a clear and compelling vision of the Kingdom to come, both now, as you seek and advance it in your Personal Mission Field, and eternally, once Jesus has returned in glory and we see Him as

He is.

*Sing Psalm 22.26-28.*

(Darwall: *Rejoice, the Lord Is King*)

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.

Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.

Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord.

All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. How do we know that Jesus is going to return?
2. How must we prepare for His return?
3. What should we expect to see happening and to experience as we prepare for His return?
4. How can believers encourage one another to keep focused on Jesus and His return?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from our study of Luke 21?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

Thank you.