

Does Love Need Warning Signs?

Rev. Terrance Jacob on Luke 21:5-19 SALC, 11/16/25

As a young preacher growing up with a passion for justice, I struggled with not sounding too judgemental and agitational. A mentor told me, "If you ever are in a hostile setting, just preach about love, and you'll be safe." The basic message of the Gospel is love. We accept and walk in God's love for us, we love God back ("because he first loved me") and then we love all people with God's unconditional love. So does that life of love need a sign or warning for when it will expire? Stay with me as we explore the text today. Relax, it's not an "end-times" sermon. The topic I chose is "Does Love Need Warning Signs?"

Cars have warning signals: from "your turning light is on", when we forget to turn it off; "fill gas", when we forget to fill-up; "low tire pressure", "door is open", "Oil Change"... all when we forget to maintain the car or are absent-minded when driving. The bottom line is that warning lights or signs let us know that our cars need attention in order to prevent accidents. In other words to save us, either our lives or to save our cars.

In the text, the people were asking for a sign, a warning. When will these things happen? When will the temple be destroyed? When will there be the desolation? How will we know? Show us a sign so we'll be ready.

There were many evangelists who travel the country talking about end-time prophecies. Theirs is a call for

people to come to Jesus fueled by fear created by a warning. "If you die today, where will you spend eternity?" You probably see that on billboards if you drive in the country. I must add that that type of messaging comes from those who typically care nothing about the deep social and political ills in the world - but that's another sermon. The fear mongering is about warning signs - warnings that the end is coming, so repent or perish.

Some of these harbingers of doom are more sophisticated. They get deeper into scientific theories and explanations as to why and when the world will self-destruct, like the predicted so-called "rapture" on Sept 23, 2025. The Book of Revelation (of John) is a preoccupation of these prophets. The text of Revelation is complex enough and filled with imagery. There's really nothing wrong with trying to interpret it, but these interpreters bamboozle us even further. They tell you it is to warn you. To give you a chance to save yourself before it is too late. Is that what salvation is about, or is it about God's Grace that is about love and not fear?

Since the people in the text today ask Jesus for signs, he goes ahead and tells them about wars, or rumours of wars; earthquakes, natural disasters, but those are not the signs that they or us today need to be preoccupied with.

Jesus goes on to talk about the persecution of the church, and how Christians will be imprisoned. That too

is not a sign of the end. Jesus said that these times will be opportunities to testify of Him and be His witnesses to the world. With these signs, says Jesus, "many will come in My Name", that is, claiming to be Christian and speaking for God. Jesus says, "Do not follow those who come with the warning signs!"

Jesus adds, "Don't be concerned about these so-called signs. You'll be ok. In fact, don't even worry about preparing speeches in defence of the faith I came to give, let alone about whether the world is coming to an end. Keep witnessing of me and you'll be ready!" That means, Be Love! Love is not driven by fear.

This whole dialogue is not about warning signs. It's about the resilience of the Gospel, of our faith, of our standing as the Body of Christ. It's not a prophecy of doom but of life - living eternal life in Christ.

God loves us so much that he gave us his life so that we too might live with him - an eternal life, an abundant life that starts now. Not a life that is free of pain and persecution - there will be pain, just as there is pain caused by natural disasters AND conflict by enemies of the Gospel. Yet, the pain and suffering, for the Christian, does not cause us to panic or despair, but to cling to Jesus and the assurance that "It is Well... with my soul!" And then we live as witnesses, assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, as Paul says in Romans 8:31ff. "Nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor

demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow.”

Another time Jesus answered an expert in the Scriptures who, also fearing the future, asks “what shall I do to inherit eternal life (Luke 10); “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.” In Matthew’s account (chapter 22), Jesus adds, “On this hang all the commandments of the Scriptures and the words of the prophets.” On This hangs all the expectations, requirements, faith, all of who you are in Christ - love God and love your neighbor! We experience God’s love, and it ignites a love in us for God and for our neighbor and we work for their wellbeing.

That Gospel is about love not fear and looking for signs so that we can “make right with God” Once that Love starts it never ends, so Love does not need warning signs to be true. Live a life of love and what happens in the world will not stop you and you will not fear? The call to come to Jesus is not about saving ourselves from death but saving us to love. Let’s love and fear will not overcome us, even if loving fiercely brings you into conflict with evil people and systems. Amen.