

CHRIST, OUR LIGHT:

## The Disturbing Light of His Coming

Luke 21:29-36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

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**AUDIO:** [www.buzzsprout.com/admin/episodes/331007-christ-our-light-the-disturbing-light-of-his-coming](http://www.buzzsprout.com/admin/episodes/331007-christ-our-light-the-disturbing-light-of-his-coming)

Does it surprise you that your pastor wants you to think of Jesus' Second Advent during this first Sunday which celebrates his first Advent? The two are linked, and we live between them. And maybe we've sugared up Christmas so much, we are incapable of hearing the sharper edges of Advent. Listen to Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The coming of God is truly not only glad tidings, but first of all frightening news for everyone who has a conscience." He goes on to add, "We have become so accustomed to the idea of divine love...at Christmas that we no longer feel the shiver of fear that God's coming should arouse in us....taking only the pleasant and agreeable out of it and forgetting the serious aspect, that the God of this world draws near...and lays claim to us" [*A Testament of Freedom*, p. 185].

Jesus' words in Luke 21 are for us. What should our posture be as we ponder his coming into our lives, whether that coming is in fresh ways or if his coming is at the end of history. JESUS SAYS FIRST OF ALL, CONTINUE TRUSTING, vv. 29-33. Stay calm. Jesus' words in v. 32 no doubt refer to the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 AD. We also fear military enemies and terrorism, right? Jesus says, "Just read the times and trust me. My word endures long after armies and cruel dictators are dead and gone" (v. 33). Notice that most of the Old Testament references to God's word enduring forever are references to God's word, but here, it's Jesus' word--he is not merely bringing the Good News; he is the Good News! In other words, Jesus is the place where God's light starts shining through. So we must learn to operate out of faith, not out of fear. Trust his word. Trust him!

JESUS SAYS SECONDLY, CONTINUE BEING VIGILANT, which means alert and awake spiritually (vv. 34-36). Notice the warning that our hearts get weighed down first of all by bad choices--the word "dissipation" means drunken nausea, or dizzying hangover. But notice. Sometimes, we are weighed down by life's worries. God just never seems to make it to the top of the stack of priorities. We are lulled into false security, as if life is always going to be as it has been.

Remember that great scene in "It's A Wonderful Life"? George Bailey is so full of his own plans. "I know what I'm going to do tomorrow and the next day and the next year and the year after that. I'm going to see the world. I'm gonna build air fields. I'm gonna build skyscrapers..." Yes, we have our plans! And they're not necessarily bad, but where's God?

Jesus uses the word "trap" (v. 35). Are we able to stay wary, vigilant this holiday season, aware of the traps? The trap of overspending and under-loving? The trap of consumerism vs. discipleship? The trap of thinking we have lots of time and don't need Christ today. Traps. Michelangelo once defined hell as truth seen too late. Traps.

To take Jesus seriously in this Luke text is to acknowledge the world is messed up and we're a part of that mess-up! Listen to Irish poet W.B. Yeats: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..." By the way, that poem is entitled, "The Second Coming." Truly, this Advent season finds us bemoaning the world falling apart, the center not holding. Dark days, to say the least. ISIS, campus unrest, deep racial and cultural divides. Darkness.

But our faith can be summed up in one word: hope. Or, if you prefer, light. The Apostle Paul picks up this light-darkness theme in 1 Thes. 5:4-6: "But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober." Jesus' first and second comings are distinguished by light!

And by the way, his Second Coming focus should not be on WHEN, but WHY (vv. 9-10). A friend of mine once told about seeing the ugliest car ever. It was, he said, ugly on ugly! Held together with baling wire, muffler dangling. A patchwork of calico, paint colors of all kinds. But the thing that caught his eye: a sign on the care which read, "This is not an abandoned car." The driver was afraid some law officer would call to have it towed away. Yes, our world is a mess. Yes, it is ugly. But it is God's. And the owner has not abandoned it. He will come again and claim it. God isn't finished with this world yet. He isn't finished with you yet, either. The owner will come back and claim it all!