

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

November 13, 2022

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 65: 17-25

Responsive Reading; Psalm 98

Epistle Reading; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13

Gospel Reading; Luke 21: 5-19

Sermon Title: **I Will Give You a Mouth and Wisdom**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; Have a mouth to proclaim Jesus and the wisdom to know when to be quiet and let your actions do the talking.

OK. It is sermon time. I got good news. I got bad news. I got sorta goodish news and I got sorta badish news and I got a game plan to hopefully get us through it.

You know when things get tough, we like to think there is going to be something to look forward to. If you go to the dentist and face a big needle, your jaw propped open for ever, grinding, scraping, cotton balls stuck in your mouth and your saliva backing up until they stick that suction thing in there. You hope

it is all going to be worth it. You need to believe that you will be able to eat the things that you like and be pain free.

Today our scriptures are doing the same thing. Isaiah tells us of a future that is going to make everything we are going through worthwhile.

There is going to be a new heaven and a new earth where we won't even remember all the bad stuff we have had to face. We will be glad and rejoice. There will be no tears or weeping. Kids will live and be healthy to a ripe old age. Our crops won't be destroyed and our houses will not be foreclosed on. The wild beasts will be friendly and cuddly and they, "shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain says the Lord." Good news.

The Psalm reading gives us more good news. It not only says that it will be good but that we will give credit where credit is due. We will praise God for everything that we got. It says that even things in nature like rivers and hills will praise God and the sea will roar its approval. It is going to be good and it will be so good that we will all see it for how great it is. Woopy!

Maybe I should stop right here. Nope, can't do that.

Because here comes the Gospel. Jesus tells His followers that things are going to get worse before they can get better.

We have to remember here that Jesus was talking to His followers that would face the terror of a ticked off Rome.

Although this is pretty much aimed at them, we too will see some of that stuff ourselves. Jesus warns of wars and natural catastrophes. Jesus warns of false prophets and corrupt preachers. He says that many will be martyred and betrayed by the very people that they should be able to trust.

Jesus does not paint a very pretty picture but He does point out how this stuff will give His followers an opportunity to testify in His behalf. In verses 13 through 15 He says, “But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore, settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.”

You may be saying to yourselves right now, “Where is Jesus going with this?”

It is not really that rare. How many times have you seen someone going through trouble but maintaining a smile and a positive attitude? If you ask them how they can do it they often attribute it to their faith in Jesus Christ. This almost always brings about the personal response of, “Boy I wish I had that kind of faith!” Voila! That is exactly what Jesus is promoting.

In our Epistle Lesson Paul reaffirms what Jesus has said and adds a couple of suggestions to help you portray the kind of person that Jesus is asking you to be.

Jesus says, “But we command you, brethren that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” i.e. Walk the walk of a doer for Christ. Paul tells how he continued to work to support himself while preaching the gospel. Although being a minister is a job that should be supported by those who benefit from that teaching, Paul felt that people would respect his teaching more if they did not feel that he was ripping them off.

How we carry ourselves as we profess a loyalty to Jesus gives credibility to our message. If we tell someone in distress to have faith and believe and then turn around and kick the dog that just got in our way our message will have lost all its credibility. If someone is fretting about a real problem and we don't give them room to vent because their actions irritate us, then we are not giving them a reflection of the love and compassion of our Lord and Savior. Sometimes we have to speak up and sometimes we have to shut up. Whatever we do, we should do it in such a way that people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

Let my closing prayer be, Dear God help me to practice what I preach and let that influence others to do the same. I love you Jesus. Hallelujah and Amen