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THE PRAYER OF THE DAY O Lord, almighty and ever-living God, You tell us of the last days and the coming Judgment, calling us to be prepared. Fix our hearts on minds on Jesus, the we may find eternity in Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Malachi 4:1-6

(Malachi tells of the coming Day of the Lord.)

1 "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. 3 Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. 4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.

5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

THE EPISTLE LESSON 2 Thessalonians 3:(1-5) 6-13

(Paul gives directions for living in the last days.)

1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 21:5-28 (29-36)

(Jesus tells of the last days, including the destruction of Jerusalem.)

5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

7 "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" **8 He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.** 9 When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." 10 Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. 12 "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.

13 This will result in your being witnesses to them. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 All men will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By standing firm you will gain life.

20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29 He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. **31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.** 32 "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.** 34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

INTRO - For years the economy of our country has been one of the strongest in the world, and so the dollar has been the currency of exchange world wide. But, our economy is not as strong as it was and others are calling for a new standard economy. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable.

- I. The people of Jesus day had been through change, and the weren't happy with the change.
 - A. At one time during the reign of David and Solomon Israel had been a strong, influential, independent nation.
 1. But that strength eroded as the nation split in a civil war
 2. That strength eroded as the values that made the nation strong declined and the people turned to idols.
 3. That strength eroded when the nation was conquered first by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., and then by the Romans in 167 B.C.
 4. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable.
 - B. In our lesson for today the people don't want to hear what Jesus is saying. Worse change was coming. Jesus is talking about the coming destruction of Jerusalem.
 1. In verse 20 we hear, **20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.**
 2. In verse 24 Jesus says, **24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**
 3. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable.
 - C. Still greater change and troubles were coming. Jesus was discussing the end of the world as we know it when He comes again as Judge.
 1. In verse 25 and verse 26 Jesus says, **25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.**
 2. Ultimately in verse 33 Jesus says, **33 Heaven and earth will pass away,**
 3. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable.
- II. A pastor recently told me, "We built a new building and we had lots of kids in Sunday School. But, now parents have trouble getting their kids to church. We're not using all our building." Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable. Change can be discouraging because they can bring troubles.
 - A. Part of today's lesson is a warning. The warning is that as this world passes away, there is a judgement coming.
 1. Jesus says, **34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the**

watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

2. Don't lose hope and turn somewhere other than God looking for hope.

3. Don't lose faith and turn to the temporary material things of life for joy.

B. It is not just non Christians that can hang on to the possessions of this life. God's people get caught in this too.

1. Remember, Jesus says, **heaven and earth will pass away.**

2. What good is it to value what will ultimately pass away and have no value?

III. The good news is that in the midst of the difficult changes of this world, there is something we can count on and depend on. The other day I looked at a list of the 96 people who were installed as Officers and Board members in January of this year. Of the 96 people installed, 10 no longer live in our area. In fact, there are about another 5 or 10 other families who have moved. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable. But, in the midst of the changes of life, there is a constant. Jesus says in today's Gospel lesson **33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

A. When the world is changing around us God does not change.

1. Hebrews 13:8 says, **8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**

2. Because Jesus is the same, His strength and love remain constant in this world's trouble.

B. Because Jesus doesn't change, God's words don't change. **my words will never pass away.**

1. That is why the words of Psalm 46 remain true. **1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.**

2. That is why the words of John 10 remain true. **27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.**

3. That is why the words of Romans 8 remain true. **38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

4. That is why in our lesson, Jesus can say, **When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."** In other words, through the changes of this life, hold on to the one thing that is sure, the love of God, and the Word of God.

C. Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable.

But, when life is changing, and we face our fears, the best thing is we have something sure to hold onto.

1. We can hold onto our Lord, His forgiveness, and His love.
2. We can hold onto our Lord and His Word and the truth of His promises.

CONCLUSION In the last 2 years we have had about 15 or 20 funerals, many of them for active church members. Sometimes people say to me, “We were married for over 50 years. Now what do I do?” Life in our world changes, and not always in a way that seems so favorable. But, in the middle of the changes of life we have the constant of Jesus and His Word and His love.