

PILGRIM C H U R C H

An open and affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM

Luke 21: 25 – 36

Pilgrim Bud Precise

We interrupt this program! Do you remember that phrase from radio days. I think it is still fairly common on the television. Usually, the interruption was about some disaster, calamity, fire. Something that the station thought warranted interrupting the regular scheduled program.

One thing the church does well is continuity. We like to keep it familiar, comfortable. Our new church buildings are usually built to look old – like the one we left. We do fairly much the same things every Sunday – just like last Sunday. Continuity. Want to start a ruckus in church – just try to change the time of worship. In our service, we use an “order of worship.” That is what it is for – to order our acts of worship.

Today, well, pretty much like clock work, we come to the season of Advent. Advent. The beginning of a new church year. To tell the truth, not much about it feels like a new beginning. We do have different color paraments on the altar and we have candles we did not have last Sunday. The world doesn't know it is the beginning of a new church year. I mean, we are worried about losing the weight we gained over Thanksgiving. We are excited about the Alabama/Auburn football game. We are trying to get over black Friday.!!

But our text for today speaks of a God who comes to interrupt the flow of history. It contains cataclysmic events – signs in the sun, moon, and stars. It speaks of distress among the nations. There is talk of roaring of the seas and waves. Interruption.

I was about 14. My friend Brad, who was athletic in many ways was doing great. Seems like overnight, he came down with polio! It was a scary time for our whole town. They closed the swimming pool in an attempt to keep people from congregating. No one really seemed to know much about polio. Interruption. Brad would never be the same. Neither would his friends and family. Our orderly lives were interrupted, surprised.

We usually think of God as the source of order and stability. It probably begins with our reading of the creation stories in the first two chapters of Genesis. The earth was without form and void and darkness covered everything. There was chaos, confusion and disorder. God speaks. God creates. There is order, seasons, seedtime and harvest, day and night. But actually the Genesis story at this point does not say God created order. God created light in the darkness. Maybe darkness can be order. It is in the presence of light that we discover darkness is disordered. Maybe creation is bringing a different kind of order. We do like order.

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Maybe we think of God creating order because there is much disorder in our lives and in our world. At least, it is not the kind of order we would like it to be.

In a good novel, many time story does not get going until there is some interruption – a knock at the door, something falling from the sky. This interruption makes the novel more interesting. That is also true in our lives. And sometimes, in our lives, this interruption makes our lives more difficult. Looking at our scripture for today, we are reminded how much of scripture deals with interruptions. Fundamental change. Something is going to fall from the sky. God loves us. And into our ordered, routine, comfortable way of living, God comes to us in a place we don't expect, in a way we don't expect. We use the word Immanuel – means, God is with us. Seems like that sometimes for God to come among us, God interrupts. Advent points to such a moment.

I know that we come to church mostly wanting God to bring some order, some stability, some comfort in our lives. And I hope that church is sometimes that way for us. But many times, what we need a new start, a new beginning.

There is a sentence in our text that asks us to get past the signs in the sun, moon and stars – whatever that is about. It asks us to look at our lives. “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life – that the coming of God does not catch you unexpectedly.” If we are so weighed down in our hearts, we will not recognize the coming of God into our existence. I looked up the word used in our text – dissipation. It means scattered, wasting or squandering, an idle or frivolous diversion. If our hearts are weighed down with that, then we need to be interrupted. If the worries of the day consume us, then we need to be interrupted. If we are drunk with power, and our importance, - then we need to be interrupted.

Advent. Our notions of what can be and what cannot be are turned upside down.

The good news of Advent is that God not only cares about us, but God comes to be with us. We don't have to get it all together on our own. We don't have to make the world work our right. God moves, acts, creates and recreates.

“Lord, give us the grace to be prepared for the interruption of your grace among us, give us the courage to receive you when you intrude into our lives, and give us the wisdom to follow you into the future that only you can give. Amen”