TITLE: Trouble

TEXT: Mt. 24:3-22; Jn. 16:33; Ro. 8:35-36; Deut. 31:8;

Rev. 21:4; 2 Co. 4:16-18

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about trouble.

A cartoon showed a woman at a counter marked “Educational Toys.” The clerk was showing her a box filled with oddly shaped parts. “It’s designed to prepare children for today’s complex world. Any way you put it together it doesn’t come out right.”

 We do live in troubled times don’t we?
 The US economy is in a very sad state. We have had an high unemployment rate and extremely high gas prices and double digit inflation. Millions of Americans can’t find work yet we are flooding our nation with illegal aliens pouring over our southern border. We have just passed the 30 trillion dollar mark in national debt, not only endangering our current generation, but putting the next generations of Americans, our children and grandchildren, in great peril.

 On the world stage there is much trouble also. Much of the western world is in the same, or even worse shape, than America is financially.

 Iran is very close to joining the nuclear club in its developing of nuclear weapons, and its leader has said that the destruction of Israel and the USA is among its top priorities.

 To say that we live in a troubled world would be a gross understatement!

 We live in a world that is on a path towards self-destruction….

 Jesus may very well have been speaking of our current day and current generation when he said in:

**Matthew 24:3-22(NIV)**  **3As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately.**

 **“Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”
4Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you.
5For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.**  **6You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.**  **7Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.**  **8All these are the beginning of birth pains.**  **9“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.**  **10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,**  **11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.**  **12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,**  **13but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.**  **14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**  **15“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—
16then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
17Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.
18Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.**  **19How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!**  **20Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.**

**21For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.**  **22If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.**

All these things that Jesus describes as the beginning of birth pains, I believe, we may very well be seeing happen in our world today… Wars and rumors of wars, Famines, earthquakes, an increase in wickedness, the love of many growing cold, the rise of false Christ’s and false prophets deceiving many people, and Christians being persecuted unto death…..

 It is not just that these things are all happening in our world today but are happening with an increasing intensity.

 There is always a war going on or a rumor of a war going on someplace in our world today.

 There are more famines and earthquakes in our world today than there have ever been.

 Wickedness in the form of violent crimes is at an all time high.

 The love of many has grown cold--- Women killing their own unborn children through abortion and men deserting their families is at an all time high.. Men are not as concerned with their fellow man as they once were, but much of our world has become very narcissistic, very self centered.

 New cults seem to arise every day and many Christians have been deceived by them and led astray, departing from the Gospel in which they first believed.

 Christian martyrdom is at an all-time high. More Christians have been killed in the past few decades than in all the previous 2000 years combined.

We live in a very troubled world…

 But that shouldn’t surprise us, especially if we are a Christian….

 In fact, Jesus said that the world we live in would be a troubled one…..

**John 16:33(NIV)**  **33“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus said: **in this world you will have trouble!**

 Not might or may have trouble but will have trouble…

 But Jesus also gave us a couple of pretty amazing promises in this verse as well…

**So that in me you may have peace.**

**And take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

The promise of this is that just as Jesus overcame the world, all who come to believe in Him will one day also overcome this world.

 We will overcome this world by one day leaving it and going on to our true citizenship which is in Heaven where we will then reside for eternity…

 This is really all about perspective. If we are a Christian and we live to be 100 years old then we have lived a long life as far as our earthly perspective goes.

 But we are not to have just an earthly perspective are we? As a Christian we are to develop a Heavenly perspective.

 From the perspective of Heaven, which is eternal, our 100 years of life on earth would be nothing but the imprint left by the point of a pin on the canvas of the entire universe!

 From the perspective of Heaven our stay on earth is irrelevant as far as time is concerned.

 That is why King David in the psalms describes life on earth as but a breath or a vapor in contrast to our true home which awaits us in Heaven….

 It is from this heavenly perspective that Jesus said:

**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

I have overcome the world and because I have you who have come to believe in Me as your Lord and Savior will one day also overcome this world also.

 But the first promise of Jesus in this verse of Scripture deals with the time that we do spend here on this planet….

**33“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.**

**So that “in Me” you may have peace!**

When Jesus said: “In Me” He was saying the same thing as when the Apostle Paul would use the term “In Christ” or “In Him” or “In the Lord”.

 The preposition “in” always means to take up a fixed position. Take up a fixed position in the subject that the word “in” applies to.

 In these cases, listed above it means to take up a fixed position in Jesus Christ!

 We take up a fixed position in Jesus by giving Him Lordship, allowing Him the supremacy, giving Him control of our life.

 Then, and only then, will we experience the promise He gives here of His peace in a world filled with trouble.

**I have told you these things, so that “in me” you may have peace.**

 Years ago there was an earthquake in California which the silver-miners who were working deep down beneath the surface knew nothing about. The tremors and agitation stopped far above them, and only when they came up from their work did they hear of what had been alarming the people above.

 Our life may be so “hid with Christ in God” that we may be joyously oblivious of much that troubles worldly men. We may be so sheltered in God that nothing can disturb our deep, calm peace in Him. “**“in me” you may have peace** is no empty comfort, but an assured promise of practical help.

**Romans 8:35-36(NIV)
35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
36As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

 Paul here asks the question: **35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?**

 The answer is obvious—nothing shall ever separate us from the love of Christ.

**Deuteronomy 31:8(NIV)
8The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”**

Even though we live in a troubled world we can live in the peace that Christ has provided us with the calm assurance that “The LORD himself goes before us and will be with us; he will never leave us nor forsake us. So we need not be afraid or ever discouraged.”

There was an old Glasgow professor named MacDonald who, along with a Scottish chaplain, had bailed out of an airplane behind German lines. They were captured and put in a German prison camp.

A high wire fence separated the Americans from the British, and the Germans made it next to impossible for the two sides to communicate. MacDonald was put in the American barracks and the chaplain was housed with the Brits.

Every day the two men would meet at the fence and exchange a greeting. Unknown to the guards, the Americans had a little homemade radio and were able to get news from the outside, something more precious than food in a prison camp. Every day, MacDonald would take a headline or two to the fence and share it with the chaplain in the ancient Gaelic language, indecipherable to the Germans.

One day, news came over the little radio that the German High Command had surrendered and the war was over.

MacDonald took the news to his friend, then stood and watched him disappear into the British barracks. A moment later, a roar of celebration came from the barracks.

Life in that camp was transformed. Men walked around singing and shouting, waving at the guards, even laughing at the dogs. When the German guards finally heard the news three nights later, they fled into the dark, leaving the gates unlocked. The next morning, Brits and Americans walked out as free men. Yet they had truly been set free three days earlier by the news that the war was over.

While Christ’s Kingdom is not fully achieved, we know the outcome of the battle. We too have been set free.

Even though these American and British prisoners were still in the same place, still being held as prisoners, still subject to mistreatment and trouble, they were able to rejoice because of the news they received that the war was actually over and it was just a matter of time before they would be free.

Church, Christ has won! He has secured the victory! The enemy has already been defeated! The war is actually over even though there may be a few battles yet to fight….

 And “in Christ” we are the victor’s!

In a sermon in the magazine *Preaching Today*, Joe Stowell said:

“In 1980, America’s economy was in the ditch. The Cold War was in its fury. Russia seemed bigger, more powerful than us, and America entertained the world at the Olympics in Lake Placid.

“I remember coming home from church the Sunday that America was playing Russia in hockey. It was in the end of the first period, and we were beating the Russians. All of a sudden I realized my stomach was in a knot. My knuckles were white, and I had this anxiety about the game. All through the second period we were ahead. Going into the third period, I knew what would happen.

 The Russians would score five goals at the end of the game, beat us, and we would be embarrassed again. But we won!

“It was such a big deal that the national networks broadcast the game again. My wife and I watched the whole thing Sunday night. Only this time I didn’t have a knot in my stomach. I leaned back on the couch and put my feet up.

“What made the difference? I could relax because I knew the outcome.”

When we have faith that God is working for our eternal good, we can have amazing peace even when we don’t know the outcome of a particular battle because we know that the war has already been won and we will one day experience an amazing freedom and relief from troubles.

On that day that we celebrate the final victory because of our faith in Jesus Christ, the victory of being with Christ in Heaven, Scripture says that:
**Revelation 21:4(NIV)
4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

What is the old order of things that will pass away? Our world of trouble will one day pass away!

So, how do we respond to this world of trouble in which we live in the meantime while we await the coming of Gods Kingdom?

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18(NIV)**  **16Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.**  **17For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**  **18So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

**Therefore we do not lose heart. --For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

What is unseen is Christ and His fulfilled Kingdom!

 What is unseen is our eternal home in Heaven with Him!

 What is unseen is the ultimate defeat of the enemy and the defeat of the world of trouble that we now reside in!

We are to not loose heart but patiently endure the troubles of our day which Scripture tells us are light and momentary compared to the eternity of Bliss that awaits us in Christ.

And we are to fix our eyes on what is unseen, fix our eyes upon Jesus and His soon coming Kingdom on this earth and that day when He will wipe every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Jesus said: **I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

And because Christ has overcome this world and all of its trouble, so will also all who have come to believe in and on Him for the salvation of their souls…And while we await that time we can have His peace in our hearts….

Are you thankful this morning for serving a God that is so much greater than the troubled times in which we live?

 A God who has already fought and won the ultimate victory and has won it for you and me…..