

**Luke 21:25-36**  
**Creekside COB**  
**November 29, 2009**

### **“Are You Setting Off Any Alarms?”**

A man named Jack was struggling through an airport with two huge and obviously heavy suitcases when a stranger walks up to him and asks "Have you got the time?" Jack sighs and puts down the suitcases and glances at his wrist. "It's a quarter to six," he says. "Hey, that's quite a fancy watch!" exclaims the stranger. Jack brightens a little. "Yeah, it's not bad. Check this out" - and he shows him a time zone display not just for every time zone in the world, but for the 86 largest metropolitan cities. He hits a few buttons and from somewhere on the watch a voice says "The time is eleven 'til six" in a very West Texas accent. A few more buttons and in the same voice says something in Japanese. Jack continues "I've put in regional accents for each city." The display is unbelievably high quality and the voice is astounding. The stranger is struck dumb with admiration. "That's not all," says Jack. He pushes a few more buttons and a tiny but very hi- resolution map of New York City appears on the display. "The flashing dot shows our location by satellite positioning," explains Jack.

"I want to buy this watch!" says the stranger. "Oh, no, it's special to me. I designed it." "I have to have it, what do you want for it?" asked the stranger. "I am not sure, I spent a long time making this watch." "How about \$5,000?" says the stranger. "No, it means more than that to me." "I'll tell you what, I will give you \$7,500 for the watch." Jack thought about it for a moment and refused the offer again. The stranger made one more attempt at getting the watch. He said, "OK, my final offer is \$10,000." Jack said, "Hmmm, \$10,000 will be fine." The stranger was delighted and wrote a check for the watch. The stranger happily took the watch and began to walk away. "Hey, wait a minute," calls Jack after the stranger. Jack points to the two suitcases he'd been trying to wrestle through the airport. "Don't forget your batteries!"

#### **AIRPORT SECURITY**

I am sure all of you are acquainted with air travel and the problems that are incurred from the 9/11 terrorists attack. We begin with the long term parking or if someone is seeing you off, you are dropped off and the good byes are less than personal. Once inside, you may be moved from one spot to another on a commuter shuttle to your destination gate only to find that you are placed in front

of a computer kiosk to fend for yourself. If that isn't the most impersonal part of the trip, you have to worry about a random search of your luggage.

But for me the worse is the airport security. If you don't know what I mean, let me show you a funny scenario of a common occurrence.

[Show *Friends* video]

This is just a funny quip of what happens in airport security.

### ANXIETY MACHINE

However, this is the only a tip of the iceberg as there is a machine in the works that may add to the already chaotic situation that security causes. It is titled "The Anxiety Machine." It works the same as a polygraph test. The machine is currently being designed with the understanding that people who are planning terrorism attacks may have certain levels of anxiety. These levels of anxiety would measure sharp changes in temperature, pulse and breathing. With these physical warnings, as they pass through security, the machine will determine their anxiety level which will trigger an alarm that alerts security of a possible threat.<sup>1</sup>

Once security is alerted the suspects are then hauled away for questioning, the suspect is monitored by camera for any minute facial expressions to determine if suspect is lying.

### HOW ARE WE AFFECTED?

I don't know about you but I am sure that scares me. First, of all, I am nervous about flying and with the suspicion of the security check the entire situation leaves me uneasy. We are not aware of what might happen or what triggers their suspicions. Do we look like terrorists? What does a terrorist look like? What does a terrorist dress like? What are their mannerisms? Do my mannerisms mimic theirs? Who really knows?

There are already numerous critics to this machine as no one can pinpoint what behavioral profiles fit what kind of person. It is a sure bet that because of some of the things that are going on in the world that many of us are likely to set off the alarms.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank, Thomas. "Anxiety-detecting machines could spot terrorists." *USA Today*, September 18, 2008. [usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-09-18-18-bioscanner\\_N.htm](http://usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-09-18-18-bioscanner_N.htm).

## I SET OFF ALARMS

I know I can feel nervous with the slightest bit of accusation. I remember visiting a Southern Baptist church one Sunday when the pastor was preaching on pornography. I sat in shock for most of the sermon not believing the content of the preaching. But it got worse when the preacher came down from the pulpit and began to head in a direction of a certain area in the congregation. Well, I was holding my breath as it seemed like someone was about to be busted for something that I did not want to be witness to. I was scared. Now I knew it wasn't me but something about the moment caught me in a breathless place wondering if there was something that I did that I did not remember. Now I know I would have set off an alarm that day.

I don't know how you might be setting off an alarm today. Jesus gives us an idea of some things that could be setting off alarms. All his talk about what kind of mess the world may be in when he is ready to come back. I can see how alarms could be going off.

A minister watched a TV evangelist hawk a book about the end of the world. "Buy this book," the evangelist said, "and you will learn how to read the signs of the times so you may know that Jesus is coming very soon." On impulse, the minister called up the televangelist's 800 number and asked the representative to please send him a book for free. She was sorry, she told him, but she couldn't do that. The book cost \$15.95. If he could supply them with a major credit card number, though .... "No, you don't understand," the minister objected. "I can't figure out why you're asking for money at all. If you really believe Jesus is coming soon, you won't need money. You should be giving the books away!" With that, the operator was no longer "standing by."

## TV EVANGELISTS

There are tv evangelists who are setting off alarms about the end times. Have you noticed that there is so much talk about the end times? There are some pastors who base their entire ministry on the end times. There are churches everywhere studying the apocalyptic books. This phenomenon is bringing people into the churches in search of the signs. These pastors are stirring up people causing chaos generating anxiety among Christians everywhere.

## CHAOS

In today's scripture passage, Jesus wants us to know that there will be days like this. That we will have chaos. The kind of chaos that was present at the beginning of the world. It is the kind of chaos that causes us to yearn for order. The kind of chaos that turns our world as we need it to be, upside down. Jesus says today that it is the kind of chaos that will *cause people to faint from fear and*

*from foreboding upon what is coming upon the world.*

## JOKE

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a little boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing-we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

## HOPE INSTEAD OF CHAOS

Now that's hope! And that is the hope that Jesus calls us to. But Jesus calls us to have hope in the middle of our chaos. He knows there will be days like this. He knows that chaos in our own lives is inevitable. He knows we are going to have plenty of anxiety. It is no wonder given the state of today's economy. When many of us took a hit in our retirement. Where job security is an oxymoron.

When we hear those tv evangelists we have to wonder if they understand what Jesus wants for us. Jesus wants to give us a hope. He wants to give us a hope to cling to through the chaos. He doesn't want us feeding on that chaos.

## AND HE TELLS US TO HAVE FAITH NOT FEAR

Jesus' first directive was simple and clear: Before we are overcome with fear, Jesus calls us to *stand up and raise our heads*. Jesus knew the unpredictable nature of a fearful heart. Jesus tells us to stand up and raise your heads. He wants us to keep our eyes on Him and have faith instead of fear.

## FAITH NOT FEAR

The sky is falling, the sky is falling is what this whole passage of scripture was reminding me of. You know when the acorn falls on the Chicken Little's head and the chicken believes that the sky is falling and proceeds to tell all.

Sunday evening, October 30, 1938, between the hours of eight and nine o'clock, millions of Americans were tuned to the CBS radio network. They heard an announcer's voice breaking into the music of an orchestra: "Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio News." Then, during the next hour, the audience was stunned to hear a series of increasingly hysterical voices narrating an invasion of Martian monsters, landing first on a New Jersey farm, then unleashing poisonous gases over New York City. The broken, anguished voice of an announcer continued: "Avoid bridges to Long Island -- hopelessly jammed. All

communication with Jersey shore closed . . . No more defenses. Our army wiped out . . . artillery, air force, everything wiped out. This may be the last broadcast.” Later they learned that they had been listening to the Orson Welles-Mercury Theatre production of War of the Worlds. It has been estimated that, of the six million people who heard the broadcast, no fewer than one million experienced serious levels of distress. Thousands were thrown into absolute panic.

Yesterday, I saw a news bulletin flash across the screen during a football game and it read. Tiger Woods in an accident - paralyzed and will never play gold again. This is truly sensationalism.

Their panic is understandable. The future is uncertain. We simply do not know what lies ahead -- what might happen next. But we are not to feed off the frenzy but to be ready in our faith.

That’s why he says, Don’t set off any alarms!

Jesus says, “STAY ON GUARD -DON’T GET CAUGHT UP IN FOOLISHNESS  
KNOW THE REAL SIGNS

Don’t get caught up in the coping mechanisms of this world. Don’t let the news of the day scare you into a drunken stupor, or dissipation which is avoidance and over-indulgence or worry.

These are the ways that people who don’t know the Lord handle chaos. You see it throughout the community. People who cannot cope with the ways of the world. They overindulge in alcohol, drugs, food shopping etc. These are just a few.

Stand up and raise your head and look to God. Do not conform to the world’s way of handling problems.

Stand up so that you can see what is going on. Stay on guard - Stay aware of what is happening. If you turn away you might miss what God has to show you. You might miss the comfort God wants to give.

Don’t take the others’ word for it. Don’t get caught up in that crazy talk. Be on guard. Search out the answers for yourself. Don’t get caught up in any kind of coping mechanisms ignoring the signs of the days. Don’t let people spoon feed you information.

When we get caught up in the midst of the world’s chaos we risk missing a miracle

God is trying to perform. Remember God is a God of impossibilities. We are to look to Him for our answers and understanding. Set our eyes on Him.

Root out those problems. Hope in Christ. Jesus tells us today to stay centered on God.

#### CONSTANT PRAYER

Put the chaos on your prayer list. Jesus tells us to stay in constant prayer so we can combat some of those monkey wrenches that come our way.

Centering ourselves on God instead of the things the world offers, gives us a calm assurance of our God and who He is. Jesus offers hope in the midst of chaos because we know that God is a God of order. In that knowledge, we know that all things work for good for those who love God.

Ask God to reveal truth to you. God will.

#### CLOSING

We have a tension of what is now and what is to come. That tension has a risk of causing chaos. Jesus knows this and our situation. We are to cling to the hope of Christ. Jesus helps us today cope in the way that is good for our souls.

We are not to set off any alarms with our fear and anxiety but to remember that we will always have chaos. We have a real understanding that Jesus is with us now. We know that His spirit lives in us and we can count on him in our moments of fear and trepidation.

Jesus is our hope that we cling to in the times of today.