

Intro:

Are you familiar with the book Utopia? It was written many years ago by a guy named Thomas More. Utopia is a fictional tale of a made up land where farming was the most sought after occupation. Where people got along. Where people knew their place in society. People had religious differences but they sorted them out amicably. The idea of money was despised. In fact if there were criminals in the Land of Utopia, they were shackled by golden chains. All in all, people got along, they helped one another, they were selfless. Seemingly, quite a rosy and optimistic concept

I think many in our society would crave living in such a harmonious place where cares and worries were easily taken care of and folks just got along and hardship was limited or nonexistent. I mean, how often don't you hear someone say, "It's 2018 and we haven't solved world hunger yet? We haven't stamped out racism of any and all kinds yet?" But Thomas More was a smart guy. He realized how unrealistic such a place was. He put the great irony of the book right in the title. Utopia. It's a made up Greek word and it means "No Place." Thomas More realized the Utopia cannot exist in this world. He realized that such optimism was unfounded.

But I'm obviously not up here today to talk to you about a book or a fictitious society that was dreamed up in the 1500s! It's the season of Advent! It's a season of anticipation and a season of Hope! And not just a rosy optimistic outlook on the future or the coming year, but real God given hope.

This is where the Holy Spirit would center our thoughts for this morning – He directs us to be watchful and careful so that our Hope Always Trumps Optimism.

CONTEXT:

See, as usual, as we ponder the Word of our Savior Jesus here in Luke 21 it's helpful to consider where and when he said this. It was holy week, mere days before Jesus' crucifixion. He and his disciples are walking the streets of Jerusalem. And his disciples are marveling at the massive and beautiful stones of the temple!

Part 1: Watch

As they saw that huge structure, as they marveled at the construction, the weight and size of those blocks – they were also pondering something else, as well. They are musing and day dreaming about their very own Jewish Utopia.

And let's not be too hard on them! We might have done the same thing in their sandals! They had just come into the city, their capital city, with their Lord Jesus! The rightful Heir of King David! At the moment, from their perspective they thought they were watching their rosy optimistic vision of the future come true!

Here Jesus kind of dumps a bucket of cold water over their head. In so many words, Jesus tells them, "You know, a day will come when not one of these Stones is left on the other?" What a sock in the gut! "The optimistic future you're hoping for, it won't happen!"

Instead Jesus directs their minds and their eyes to where they should be. That they should be watching not with an earthly optimism, but they should be watching the world with a Godly hope. He says a time will come when not just the stones on that temple will be upset, but all creation would be in confusion! There would be signs or wonders in the sun moon and stars, nations would quake in fear and the heavens would be shaken! He wanted them to watch those things like the changing of seasons, as he says, ***"Look at the fig tree and all the trees.<sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.<sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near."***

APPLICATION

Watch your future with Hope! As though you are watching the seasons change. This is what you and I are directed to think about here when we see a country in turmoil. When we hear of tragedy. You know that for about 93% of it's

existence our country has been at war – fighting in some way shape or form for 242 years! And not a single year goes by without some devastating natural disaster.

And yea, our country our society is not what it used to be. I'm still rather young, and it's not the nation that I grew up in as a kid. So I can't imagine the change that has happened, or the change that many of you who are older than me have witnessed.

I think that just goes to prove Jesus' point, that he makes to his disciples here! No matter how optimistic we might be about our immediate future, Utopia is nowhere! As you watch a changing world remember that your Hope always Trumps optimism.

And what is that hope exactly? Jesus says, ***“<sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*** This is what the season of Advent is all about! It's a season of anticipation! Not just for Christmas time and presents. Not just because we have an optimistic outlook on the coming new calendar year. Advent is a season of anticipation and Joy as we are reminded that Jesus is coming again! That is our great Hope, our great anticipation! Just as the ancient Hebrew people Hoped for a promised savior to take away sin – and he came! We hope for the second Advent, and we can have the same surety, the same certainty that he will come again. Not to carry the weight of sin in humility – but in glory to bring his people home. Jesus says, ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*** Let your hope in him trump all earthly optimism.

Part 2. Take Care!

How timely all these words to the disciples would have been! They're in holy week! In a few short days, unbeknownst to them – at the moment – their whole world is about to be turned upside down! In a very short time. All the cares and worries of this world and this life would mean very little to them – if anything at all. Jesus says, ***“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.”***

Jesus wanted them to take care and be mindful of the things that were going on in the next few days. Because not even the last day, but for many of the disciples Good Friday would come upon them like a trap. They would flee and deny and hide out in fear. Their optimism for a better future here on earth with their friends, and lives and families would be shattered.

APPLICATION:

In our daily lives we fret and worry about a great many things. We are always seemingly driving at life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the here and now. But should the Lord come back, should we find our selves on our dying bed – think about how little our earthly accomplishments really matter. I'm not trying to give everyone here an existential crisis – or I don't know maybe I am! The point is, do our lives reflect the fact that the Lord could come back at any time? Or are we always so focused on this life, on our optimism for our future? What happens when those things don't work out? What happens when our optimism is shattered? Jesus says take care! Jesus talks about drunkenness here – I don't think that is so much a denunciation of drinking as it is a call to have a sober mind. And ultimately how do we do that?

We stay in the Word, His words that endure even though heaven and earth should pass away! His Words that remind us of our real hope, our sure hope.

CONCLUSION:

Brothers and sisters, you know life between the two Advents of Christ is not easy! There are plenty of hardships, suffering, and strife – especially for the Christian. Yet, because of Jesus and the Hope we have in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent – we can endure! We can live joyful and purposeful lives. We know that Utopia is nowhere on this side of Glory. That peace and harmony is found only in Heaven. Believers have more than optimism for the future. We have Hope in Christ. So watch and take care! And always let your hope in Him trump optimism for this life. Amen.