

“Your Redemption is Drawing Near”

Luke 21:5-28

Grace Mercy and peace are now yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

As I spoke with the kids today, our theme is that of the end. We know the know the end of the story, that Jesus will return on the clouds again to save His people – This image behind me is the end of God’s story Where we live happily ever after in the new creation. Yet Jesus in this section wants to lay out the signs before the end and strife of the end times. It is a difficult passage, but we need to remember as we go through this how the story ends.

Our passage begins with the disciples admiring the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus has been teaching in the temple and running into conflict with the religious leaders in it. In the aftermath of Jesus run in, the disciples take a moment and admire the building that they are standing in. They see the beauty of Herod’s temple, the artistry and imposing sight it casts over Jerusalem. For us it is difficult to wrap our heads around just how big this temple is. **TEMPLE SLIDE** On the screen now is a recreation of the temple as it might of looked in Jesus day. This recreation gives us a slight insight into the scale and beauty of this temple. Notice how large in size it is compared to the small houses in the background and how well decorated it is with Gold adorning the doors and the decorations on the roof. This temple towered over the city and was the beating heart of Jewish society in Jerusalem.

This temple has had an important history with the people of Israel. For years this temple taught the people of God that their God dwelt with them. It told the people that their God was

amongst them to deliver mercy for their sins. The Temple in its size and grandeur spoke to the impressive power of this almighty God they worshipped here. The vastness and majesty of the one who dwelt within. This building is the standing representation of God in midst of His people present for His people.

No wonder the disciples marvel at this building, Yet Jesus at the end of His ministry looks at this temple and sees something else. He sees the Temple's End. Jesus speaks some disturbing words to the disciples: As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." Jesus words are terrifying, we see this impressive, immobile, monolith of the faith. The very image of God's presence here on Earth and Jesus tells us that it will be destroyed. Uncreated. Being torn down brick by brick, until nothing remains. Jesus tells us this religious and cultural anchor of the Jewish people is going to be ripped from them and destroyed. This Temple of beauty, destroyed, uncreated, ended.

The disciples ask Jesus their burning question – WHEN? "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" Yet Jesus doesn't give them the answer they are looking for. Jesus takes this moment at the end of His years of teaching to instead teach the disciples and by extension us, about the end. Not just of a temple, but of all things. Instead of giving to them a date for when these things will take place, he exhorts and commands them to hold fast. Jesus desires that they would remain faithful despite what is coming. He responds: See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars

and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

Jesus is far less concerned with letting the disciples know when, but rather he is much more invested in making sure those who will follow Him keep the faith in the face of what will come to pass. That the fear of life in the end times, will not overwhelm their faith and trust in their savior. That the horrors and terrors Jesus speaks about will not cloud their hope they have in Him. That they will not forget the end of the story.

### **Bleak Slide**

Jesus lesson here goes beyond the destruction of the temple, Jesus seeks to prepare the hearts of those who believe in Him. To prepare them for the coming evils of the end times. Jesus paints a rather bleak image of what those who will follow Him will experience. Jesus speaks of the very fabric of creation breaking apart and being destroyed. Nation will rise against nation. War will break out amongst the peoples of the world. Man will kill man, death and destruction will tear apart the world. Where God brought life, sin brings to ruin and death. Even the very creation itself will feel the end coming. Earthquakes and famine will break out and deadly diseases will run through the world. The very creation feels the impact of sin and begins to unravel. Even the heavens will be rent asunder where Jesus tells us terrors and great signs of the heavens will be seen. All of creation trembles at the end. Sin has grabbed hold of it.

In the midst of this upheaval and unraveling those who follow Jesus will experience persecutions. The world will lay hands on the faithful, drag them out of home and bring them before the leaders of the world for judgement. To be killed for their faith. Families will turn

against families, friends against friends. In the end the faithful will be hated. Jesus tells us that in the midst of this chaos and turmoil that the witness of the persecuted faithful will go out to all the world. That their suffering for the faith will be a powerful witness to the truth.

Jesus gives a small example of what is to come in the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus says that a foreign nation, a gentile nation is going to rise against Jerusalem. Jesus spells out destruction for those inside the city. Jesus speaks: For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles. We know that this event has already taken place in 66ad the Romans marched army and besieged the city Jerusalem. The death and destruction was real, the temple was pulled down, block by block, to this day it is a ruin. What Jesus speaks will come to pass.

The words Jesus speaks are not some far off mystical nonsense that don't mean much for us today. We have been living in these end times since Jesus ascended into heaven. The signs of the end times have been all around us. War has been a major portion of human history. We see the 2 world wars that the last century brought us and the complete destruction of countries, families and ways of life it brought. The horror of war, nation rising against nation is still prevalent in our times, yet even more sinister. Gone are the days of organized armies and here are the days of ideological warfare with new fears and terrors to accompany the old. Jesus words ring true. The very creation around us creaks and breaks down. Floods, famine, hurricanes and tsunamis destroy house, land and life. The creation unravels. Jesus again is right. Around the world Christians are killed for their faith. Dragged out of home and turned in by neighbors, family and friends. Jesus speaks the truth. It feels as though the world is on fire

around us. That the world is coming apart at the seams and Jesus tells us that it is only going to get worse. How terrifying and how awful. Come Lord Jesus!

For us as Christians living in these end times. As followers of Jesus hearing these words from our saviors' mouth and knowing that things are going to get worse. There is a lot to be afraid of. As we travel closer and closer to the end, Jesus tells us the very creation begins to unravel around us. Jesus says at the close of our Gospel reading: And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Words can't describe how terrifying these days will be and there is a great temptation for you and me to lose sight of the end of the story. To see these horrors and terrors and to turn to anything that we think will protect us.

For some of us this is the reason we get involved and trust in politics. If we can just elect the right leaders or pass the right policies, we can be sure and certain that the things Jesus spoke in our Gospel reading cannot come to pass. We can legislate ourselves into a permanent sense of security and trust. We trust in our ability to legislate above Christ's victory over this evil.

Another temptation we can fall into is to simply internalize our faith. We can avoid the hardships and persecutions if we are not noticeably different than the world around us. We trade in who we as Children of God to hide under the radar. Worst of all if we don't take seriously the words of Jesus when he tells us: See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' We can trade in Christ the savior for a little Jesus or a different Jesus, one that won't put us in difficult situations, one that won't challenge and make demands of us when it could mean serious consequences.

Yet these will fail us as well. Politics will never bring the peace we need in these end times. Hiding who we are as Christians denies who Christ has made us to be as His people. Trading in Jesus for something that looks like him would be to deny our very savior. Where are we to look in these scary last days. Where are we to look for our salvation when the fire of the end of days is terrifying.

A few months ago – Paris experienced a fire that destroyed a large section of the beloved Notre Dame cathedral. **Notre Dame Fire Slide** The church caught fire in the roof and very quickly the old timbers burned. It was touch and go for a while if the cathedral would make it or if the fire would completely level this historic cathedral and fire fighters worked through the night to save it. The fire took the roof off, destroyed the spire and damaged art. The flame was eventually beat back and beaten and the charred remains of the cathedral still stood. The next morning after the fire was put out this moving photo was taken. **Cross Slide**. While the fire destroyed much of the wood timbers and damaged the walls, it didn't get hot enough to destroy the golden cross above the altar. A cross in the midst of the rubble and destruction.

In the midst of fire, in the midst of the unraveling of the world, we do not need to be afraid. We do not need to trust in politics, our ability to hide or anything other than Jesus. The same Jesus who is telling us about the end, tells us the end of the story. This Jesus goes from the Temple is tried and sentenced to death on a cross and on that cross the sin of the world dies. This Jesus rises again that there might be an end of the story. After all the signs, evils and horrors. Something amazing happens. This crucified and risen Jesus will come again. He says: And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these

things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Jesus isn't interested in telling us when or exactly what each of us will face. Jesus is interested in making sure that when we face these trials. That when we are faced with evil and persecution, we do not reach for something else to steady us, but we raise our heads. We do not cower in fear or trust in this failing creation. When we are faced with this evil we look expectedly, we raise our heads and look to the clouds – we await the day we see this – window- as the answer to the evil in the world. These horrible Jesus tells us about points us to His second coming. To the end of the story.

The evil and destruction in this world will soon be brought under our Saviors feet. The one who has died and risen comes to claim us His people. To make us a new, to restore these sinful and broken bodies to perfection and to bring us into the new creation with no more tears and no more sadness. Our story ends with a happily ever after in the new creation with our God.

So when we, brothers and sisters in Christ experience what Jesus speaks about, when we see the evil in the world, when we experience the unraveling of this creation. Do not fear, but lift your heads, Your Redemption is drawing near.