

## Sermon Notes

Twenty third Sunday after Pentecost [2 Thessalonians 3:6-13](#) [Luke 21:5-19](#)

We are coming to the end of the liturgical year, the end of the season after Pentecost. We will begin the new Church calendar year with the season of Advent, following Christ the King Sunday. Our Gospel reading from Luke for this Sunday comes after Jesus has entered Jerusalem. If we were reading the Gospel of Luke in one sitting, we would find our lectionary text comes after Jesus has entered the city riding on a donkey with the crowds, crying “Hosanna-Help us!” Jesus had numerous encounters with religious authorities and now things were getting dangerous. Even as the timeline moves closer to Last Supper, Jesus is teaching and preaching to the crowds.

When Jesus speaks of the beautiful temple Herod built, that probably could hold 400,000 people on a festival day, Jesus knows he is speaking during a time of turmoil. It will lead him to the cross. Conflict and death are immanent. When Luke writes the narrative we read, likely 30 years after the resurrection, the temple has already been burned and razed. Why did Jesus talk about the wonder that faithful pilgrims felt and the gospel writer retell the story when the temple has already been demolished? Luke wants new Christians to know that their faith makes a difference during times of persecution and natural disaster. Christians become witnesses to “God with us” until the end of time, (not, apparently, just until right now).

Apocalyptic literature is not an end of all things; rather it points to an ending of things that are. Jesus will suffer and die. To follow Jesus is to walk a road that serves others, that recognizes the lowly and welcomes the stranger. It is a feast of abundance that invites people who cannot repay or throw their own dinner party. It is even a life—Luke tells us---that means persecution.

Jesus speaks of signs in the heavens: earthquakes, famines, wars, and disasters—eclipses, meteors, comets, floods, sickness, hunger, wars and conflict---yes and yes in our own time too. How are we to respond? Jesus wants us to know, not only is our God a God who will strengthen us, God will also give us the words to speak, because we are witnesses to the power of Christ. To look up to the heavens is to not have our heads bent over looking at the ground or our phones, but to look up and be attentive to see how God is acting now. Fear causes us to withdraw from others and protect ourselves. Jesus is asking us to reach up, connect with other, declare as witnesses, the power of the Living God.

“Do not be afraid.” We are being called to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Susan+