

End Times – what Does Jesus See? Luke 21:5-19 DJK Christ Church

Signs of the end of the age

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

The angels said, “Fear not”

Jesus entered the room ‘locked for fear of the Jews’ and said, “Fear Not”

If I say the word apocalypse – some of us, “Fear much”

Today Jesus is talking apocalyptic language and in it he says, “Fear not”.

The dictionary says that an apocalypse is a total catastrophic, destruction, and end of the world

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was used as an example of an apocalypse.

I grew up with the Vietnam War movie Apocalypse Now – it shows the utter devastation of war - napalm, bombings, death.

Charlie Sheen’s famous line, “Oh I just love the smell of Napalm in the morning”.

It is horrible – catastrophic, apocalyptic.

Funny enough, the dictionary also says that “Apocalyptic’ means ‘a revelation’ – a revelation of things to come.

In my Greek bible the book of Revelation is called the book of the Apocalypse – the Greek word for Revelation is Apocalypse.

So an apocalypse can be more than destruction – it can be a revelation a message.

What is Jesus revealing in this apocalyptic language?

The last verse says it all, *“Stand firm, and you will win life”*.

Jesus is leaning against the temple wall.

This spectacular temple built by Herod – to keep the Jews happy.

It’s a mammoth complex - around 40 acres - with the temple in the middle.

“Jesus’ disciples were talking and admiring how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones.

Jesus says to them: *See these stones – one day not one stone will be left on another – it will be destroyed.*

What is Jesus revealing?

What is his apocalypse?

What is his message?

Funny enough the verses just before our text describe a very poor widow.

Jesus was trying his hardest to get the disciples to see the plight of this very poor widow.

I don’t think they saw her.

She was invisible to them because all their attention was drawn to the beautiful gemstones studded into the temple wall.

Jesus sees a poor woman.

The disciples see a temple adorned with beautiful gemstones.

Funny enough when a pastor gets a call he jumps in his car or on the internet and looks at the church building of the calling body – the beautiful church.

And his wife looks at the manse – the beautiful manse.

Jesus has a call to Jerusalem – he sees the poor woman.

He says to the disciples looking at the temple, “what you see right now will be totally destroyed” – that’s an apocalypse – a revelation.

Is Luke teaching us about Jesus’ style of ministry?

On one hand we have bricks and mortar and gemstones – and Jesus revealing that it will be knocked down to the ground.

On one the other hand we have the poor and those hungry for food and for a word of peace and comfort.

Where is your focus, disciples?

Their focus remains on the temple – you can hear panic in their voices: “Teacher, when will these walls fall down?

What will be the sign that it’s about to take place?”

There’s not a word about the widow from the disciples.

Jesus launches into apocalyptic language – he uses language from Daniel and Ezra –

“wars rumours of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, fearful events and great signs from heaven”

“You will be betrayed by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death”.

Wow apocalyptic language.

Now you and I are in the same situation as the disciples.

Do we take this literally?

Or do we look for a truth in this language – in this story?

I suppose it is a bit like a story that begins with “once upon a time” are you going to believe everything single thing in the story as truth – or are you going believe what the story is saying; the moral of the story, so to speak.

This is big – this is what divides churches – it certainly divided the Lutheran Church when they came to Hahndorf 184 years ago.

The 1000 year reign of Christ – in the book of the apocalypse – the book of revelation –

is it exactly 1000 years to the day as written –

or is it, as God also says, “a 1000 years is like a day”.

And we split.

Mostly we pick and choose what suits us.

Women should cover their hair, and not speak in church – you can go to these churches

We do have the obligation to discern what God’s word is saying into our “situation in life”.

- Disciples, look at the poor widow.
 - Jesus, look at the Gemstones in the Temple wall.
-

Apocalyptic language is meant to be unsettling – a wakeup call – **it is meant to reveal that we can trust God in the most difficult of times** – he will not fail us: **Stand firm, and you will win life.**

- Disciples, look at the poor widow.
- Jesus, look at the Gemstones in the Temple wall.

Which message works for you?

Maybe this will help: See the fancy walls you are looking at – soon not one stone will be left on another – it will be destroyed.

Where should your focus be:

- With the widow who will always be with us.
- With the fancy temple about to be destroyed.

Too many of us are distracted by the temple – or by the thought that what we know and cherish will come to an end.

Every generation has had its wars and rumours of wars – it's catastrophes – its natural disasters.

Every generation will have our precious walls destroyed until the end of time – Verse 9 says we should “not be afraid”.

Every generation will have people proclaiming that the terrible events we endure are signs of God's Judgment – Verse 9 says they are “deceivers” – “do not trust them”.

Remember no one, but no one, knows that final hour.

Jesus is telling us there be will tough times for every generation of Christians: *arrests; persecution; trials before government authorities; betrayal, hatred, even execution on account of Jesus' name;*

Jesus himself endured the same – plus some.

Into this hardship Jesus says: this persecution, is a chance to testify – and what's more, **“I will give you words and wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to resist or contradict.”**

That's good news – that's the power of the Holy Spirit released in us.

What we fear most Jesus sees as the highest opportunity to protect us and give us the right words to save us.

“Fear not”

How often do we read the Apocalypse – the book of Revelation?

Probably not too often because we can get so bogged in detail - multi headed monsters, wired prostitutes, precise numbers of saints and angel.

What's the message, “these things are passing - fear not”

Typically, these last time texts take us on all sorts of wild adventures – none of it true – in fact Jesus says watch out for deceivers.

I believe, for us this Sunday, Jesus is using wild language so that we can see a truth.

Leaning against the temple studded with gemstones.

- Do you see that poor widow?
- No Jesus we can see a magnificent temple.

This temple – your temple, whatever is or wherever it might be, will not be standing one day. But the poor widow will be standing – alone – and hungry – until the end of time.

What do you see?

We are baptising little Austin?

What's our message to him?

Hey mate there are wars in the Ukraine, and In Africa.

There're rumours of wars in China and Korea.

Hey when you go to school – there will be those who hate you and persecute you for being a Christian – even our Government, will make some things hard for you because you are a Christian.

Yes, Austin the world can't last much longer – look at the signs – Africa is in drought – we are in flood – just look at the Bunyip – they are worried about the Bunyip – it must be soon.

Where is there hope for Austin in this kind of talk.

Jesus says this kind of talk is deceiving.

In this text today – the message is *"Fear not" little fella.*

"not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm Austin, and you will win life."

When is the end of the world, is it:

- When a child dies?
- When the best crop on record is flattened by rain?
- When the cancer word is heard for the first time?
- When spouse walks away?
- When the Covid waves hits?
- When the river breaks the Levee bank?
- When the widow slips away hungry and lonely?

This is not the end of the world – this is normal life this side of heaven

Let's pray the Christians of today are looking out for you and not their temple.

This is an apocalypse a message.

What are you hearing.

I hear three things in Jesus' message:

1. Trouble is normal and will come to every generation.
2. Jesus will give us the right words to say and actions to do in these situations which will bring people to him for peace.
3. Not a hair on your head will be harmed – stand firm and you will live.

Where is our focus –

Jesus look at our mighty buildings, our Church meetings, our income, our giving?

Jesus we are worried about Wars and rumours of wars – calculations – predications – we are important people in your church.

And there stands the poor widow, there lies Yvonne in Hospital, there smiles Austin, there sleeps the homeless behind our church office, there stumbles the addict.

Don't be deceived!

Stand firm and you will live.

Remember the number one promise of God from eternity and for eternity: *I am your God and you will be my people.*

Lord let us see what you see in this community – in theses last times. Amen