

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
Proper 28  
Year B

Daniel 12:1-3  
Psalm 16  
Hebrews 10:11-25  
Mark 13:1-8

Many people went to work on a clear September morning 23 years ago and entered a couple of tall buildings everyone thought would stand for decades. Then, mid-morning, they came thundering down after two planes slammed into them. People living in the mountain region of western North Carolina never anticipated a hurricane would upend their lives until Helene arrived. People in Oklahoma seem to be used to the shattering effects of tornados, but it is jarring to see the destruction left behind by these monster storms. By the same token, no one anticipated that the great Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed when Jesus warned His disciples that no stone would remain on another, but Temple Mount in Jerusalem no longer boast of that magnificent gleaming building where Jesus taught.

Josephus, the great first century Jewish historian and general, described the Temple as a mountain of snow when seen from a distance and the reflection off the golden façade was as blinding as staring at the sun. It is no wonder that the disciples exclaimed its beauty. How could Jesus say that it would be destroyed? When he made that statement, the Temple was still under construction, though by the time Mark wrote his gospel, it had been finished. Everyone who saw this monumental structure was awed by its glory. But, Jesus said it would fall. Those who must have heard Him say this would have thought He was crazy.

In typical fashion, when Jesus was alone with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, the first four disciples called back at the beginning of the Galilean ministry asked for clarification. How would they know these things were going to happen?

Many books have been written over the years debating Jesus' answer. In fact, almost from the time He uttered the words, people have been trying to determine when these things would happen. Within the lifetime of many of the disciples, the Jews were at war with Rome and people were looking at these words of Jesus to decide if this was the end of time. In the last 200 years, a cottage industry of predictors has emerged with so-called prophets stating the end time was at hand and we should all prepare. However, later in this same chapter of Mark's Gospel, Jesus states that neither the angels nor Himself know when the time would be ripe - only God knows the time. Yet, people are still trying to scare us into believing that the time is now and we should follow them.

Jesus had a different message. Yes, He told of many persecutions, of families turning upon others close to them, of wars and pestilence, and many other tribulations, but He never told us to fear or to follow after prophets of doom. In fact, Jesus told us such prophets would come and He warned us to beware! Jesus primarily told us to wait upon the Holy Spirit to guide us when we are taken before judges.

Jesus' other message was to keep doing what we have always done - spread the gospel message to all. Are we to panic and go into hiding? No. Are we to take up arms and fight back? No. Jesus told His disciples, and He is telling us, "go on about your business as usual." Beware? Yes. Keep watch? Yes. Keep awake? Yes.

God has one mission for the people of St. Matthew's. It is the same mission we had last year and it is the same mission we will have next year. That mission is to love our neighbors, to feed the hungry, to share God's love with everyone we meet, and to be God's messengers to Christian County and the surrounding area. If we do our part, God will take care of us and bless our efforts. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Thanks be to God.