

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Daniel 12:1-3

Psalm 16

Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25

Mark 13:1-8

11/18/2018

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

1As [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" 2Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."3When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" 5Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 6Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 7When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

What's Next?

Good Morning! Some of you may know this already, but I'm what we call here in America a "gearhead." I love all things automotive. When other people get bored they do fun things like go to the movies. When I get bored, I go to car dealerships to check out what they have. My wife isn't here today, but she probably deserves to be nominated for sainthood if for nothing else than putting up with my late night drives to dealerships while we were dating. (You have to go after the dealership is closed or you get bothered by the salespersons!) Where some people want to go to Italy to see places like Florence, Rome, and Venice, I want to go and see towns like Maranello, Modena, and Bologna. That's where companies like Lamborghini, Ducati, Maserati, Pagani, and the king of them all: Ferrari, are located.

My actual mechanical skills are rather limited, but one area I can say with absolute certainty is that you would be hard pressed to find someone who can a better job of cleaning a car than me. Now years ago when I was in college I got the bright idea to do a huge detail of my car. This would mean that I would need to jack my car up, take all the wheels off and clean everything before putting the wheels back on. In order to make that what I thought would be easy, I decided to use my own tools. Since I lived with my parents at this time, my sockets and wrenches were in my closet since the garage wasn't climate controlled. As I carried my 320 piece socket set outside the house, disaster struck. The handle was at the top and it was only latched by

two small plastic clasps. The weight was just too much and every single one of the 320 pieces went flying down the steps. Words were spoken, the regret was strong. As I was about 3/4 of the way through putting every. single. piece. back into its specific spot, I realized something that I didn't know at the time existed when it comes to sockets. You can buy both 6 point and 12 point sockets. I'm not talking about the diameter of the socket or the connection point, but the amount of points or sides you see when you look inside. I had only been paying attention to making sure the right number size got put in the right spot in the tool box. After I realized my mistake, I had to take most of them all back out again and start over!

In comparison, my little mistake was rather small. It felt pretty big to me but we've all heard horror stories of some massive job being almost finished only to realize something major was wrong and the whole thing needed to be torn down and restarted.

In today's Gospel lesson the story is a little different. The temple doesn't really need torn down. For all intents and purposes things were fine, and yet Jesus took a look at the temple and boldly declared that not a single stone would be left.

I mentioned the massive size of the temple last week but here's a few more details. The temple that Jesus would have been looking at was actually the second temple. The first had been destroyed in roughly 587/586 b.c.e. This second temple was actually the work of the Herodian family and took an estimated 47 years to complete.¹ I remember reading somewhere that when the temple was finally finished it put an estimated 20,000 people out of business and that it took roughly 20 men to close the doors every evening. The temple was the center of the Jewish faith, and the center of Jerusalem. Some estimates put the size of the whole building as equal to 2-4

¹<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Temple-of-Jerusalem>

football fields. It was made up of several different courts that only specific people could enter, with the center being the holiest of holies, the place where it was believed God dwelled.

And the crazy thing about it is that Jesus was right. Roughly 35 years after his death the Romans showed up and destroyed the whole thing. The Jews had revolted, and Rome took their revolts pretty seriously. The only thing left is the wailing wall. You need to understand how much of a blow this was to the Jewish people. It would be like if every single monument in Washington D.C. was destroyed and repaved to make a parking lot. White House, Capitol building, all of it... Gone.

As I sat there staring at the text I couldn't begin to think about how I was going to turn this strange apocalyptic text into something understandable and hopeful. But then I realized that this text is less about destruction and more about the hope of something even better that is coming. The temple was the crowning jewel of Jewish society, and Jesus is promising them, and us, something even better!

It's actually the perfect text for a congregational meeting. It challenges us to rethink how the ministry here at St. Paul's in Hampton, VA can be done. Now, I'm not suggesting we tear this whole place down and start over, but I do think it's important to stop and think about what direction is God calling us towards? Our wonderful secretary Sue Clemens had a wonderful idea. As the congregational council was trying to make final decisions about the budget for 2019 she talked about what she felt the church WANTED to do first, not what it could afford. \$30,000 for HELP, \$30,000 for Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center... What would we WANT to do. That's what's been in my head.

If money, resources, and time were unlimited, what's the first way you would want to see St. Paul's serve God in this community? Really, stop and think about it for a second...

Now, what's the first step? And the step after that? If God is for us who can be against us right? I realize I'm over simplifying the issue, but if it truly is the vision and mission of this congregation, then God is working to make a way.

Jesus realized something on that hill overlooking the temple. He realized that sometimes you need to tear it all down and start over if you're going to make it even better. It's like our muscles when we exercise. I hope I'm getting this right, because I'm going off what my cross country teacher told me years ago, but basically when we work out we damage our muscles. When they repair themselves they do it so that they're even stronger. Yes, it hurts, but we can run even faster and longer the next time.

As I said about a million times last year as we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Church is a church that is ALWAYS reforming. The Holy Spirit is calling us to let go of the things that are holding us back and to live out our baptismal calling in the future. So St. Paul's... What should we destroy first? Who wants to grab the sledgehammer? God is calling, and our best days are still ahead of us. Let's go see what they have in store for us. Amen.