

**Worship Service for November 14<sup>th</sup>:** 25th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Old Testament:** Daniel 12:1-3
- **New Testament:** Mark 13:1-8
- **Psalms:** Psalm 16

**Announcements:**

- **Wednesday November 17<sup>th</sup>:** Bible Studies Acts 2 in St. George's P. C at 7pm.
- **Sunday November 21<sup>st</sup>:** 4-H Sunday Service
- **Sunday November 28<sup>th</sup>:** Communion Service – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent.

**Sermon Title: Do not be alarmed. Be aware.**

Jesus has just left the Temple with his disciples where he watched what the people did with their money, as the rich people put in large amounts of money and the widow put in everything she had. Jesus is in Jerusalem, and this is the week of his death and as he leaves the Temple he begins a discussion with his disciples about the Temple and the end of the age.

The Jerusalem Temple at this time was one of the largest, most magnificent buildings in the ancient world. It was the most magnificent building for hundreds of miles around. The Temple at this time was twice the size of Solomon's temple and had been under almost continual construction since before Jesus was born under Herod the Great and the Temple was sacred to virtually all Jews regardless of political or religious party. The Temple was destroyed around 68CE just as Jesus foretold. Foretelling the Temple's destruction would have been shocking because all of religious and cultural life in ancient Israel centred on the Temple. It was in the Temple where one encountered the divine; where one encountered God. And so the destruction of the Temple would have been shocking and even earth-shattering for an ancient Jew.

Now, what Jesus is doing here for his disciples and what Mark is doing for his audience is reimagining and reinterpreting religious life around Jesus rather than the Temple. This is really important – the Temple was where God's people encountered the divine. However, now in Jesus Christ God's people encounter the divine. It used to be when one entered the Temple that one entered God's world. Now, we don't step into God's world, God has stepped into our world in the person and the work of Jesus.

Scholars overwhelmingly believed that Mark lived in Rome and was writing this gospel for the Christian community in Rome. This would have been actually good news to them. They were thousands of miles from Jerusalem and Mark was reinterpreting religious life around Jesus rather than around the Temple. He was encouraging the people to know that serving God now was not about meeting God in the Temple but was about having Jesus in your life. The Scripture says “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).”

Mark is teaching his audience that in Christ we carry the divine with us and can therefore worship him anywhere we find ourselves, location notwithstanding. And this is the conversation that Jesus had had with the Samaritan woman who said to him that their ancestors worshiped on the Mount Gerizim, yet the Jews claim that Jerusalem is the place where everyone must worship. And Jesus replied “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:21-24).

Jesus is telling us today not to be alarmed. He is saying that his intention is not to scare God’s children but to create that awareness in them that the Last Day will come. For some of us, we might not live to see that day, because we will be the once to go and meet with the Lord. I’m sure we can remember some of our loved ones who had died and we were not sure if these ones inherited the Kingdom of God or not.

Jesus is saying that even though it may tarry, or take time, it doesn’t mean that it will not come to pass. However, when that time shall come for us, what will it be? Will we and others be wondering if we inherited eternal life or will people be able to say that they are very sure that we will be with our Father? Are we sure that if we were to pass on to eternity today, we will see Jesus and the angels welcoming us and saying “well done good and faithful servant?”

The Word of God has come to remind us and reassure us that we are not serving God in vain and that there will be a time when those who accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour will have everlasting life and those who did not will have eternal damnation. Therefore let us stand firm in our faith and hold fast to God's word of salvation. Let us live like people who carry the presence of God in them; like people who have Christ living in them.

Now Jesus and his disciples walk across the way to the Mount of Olives where they sit down, which is why this section is called the Olivet discourse and they continue asking Jesus questions. They want to know when and how these things will happen. Jesus, what are the signs to watch for? Isn't this so like us? I remember how many people contacted me right when the pandemic started wondering if this was a sign of the end times.

The Word of God is not coming to us to alarm us or to cause us fear and panic, but it is reminding us that we could be led astray if we are not careful how we live as Christians. We might think to ourselves that we have been serving God for too long for such a thing to happen to us. But let us look at the case of John the Baptist. This was someone whose birth was announced by the angels to his father Zechariah and his name John came from the angels and his assignment came from heaven. He was the one who baptised Jesus Christ and was present when the dove stood on Jesus head and when God's voice from heaven declared Jesus as His dear Son with whom He God was well pleased. Yet when trials came, while John was in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was truly the one or if they should wait for another.

Doubt crept into the heart of John the Baptist because of trials. Things might be going fine for us right now but we don't know how our lives will be tomorrow. Who would have believed it, if someone had said that there was going to be a time when the entire world will be on lockdown? No one. In the same way we can't predict anything about our future. Things might be going good today and tomorrow we could find ourselves going through challenges that will cause us to wonder about God. We can ask Job about that. He cursed the day he was born. One day we might find ourselves living in a land where we have freedom of worship and wake up to find out that things have changed and Christians are being persecuted.

Where will we spend eternity? Once again Jesus is telling us that his intention is not to alarm us or to cause us to live in fear but to create in us that awareness that the

end will surely come and that judgment will indeed come and some will have eternal life while others have eternal damnation. It is up to us to choose which it will be for us. If we are not sure, it is not the end of the world, we are still alive. Let us repent and ask God to help us to serve Him in spirit and in truth. And let us ask God to give us the boldness and courage not to keep that Word to ourselves but to bring the good news to others so that they too can inherit God's kingdom. May God help us through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayer**

Blessed God, who caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life.

As we look forward to the day of Christ's return in glory, help us by Your Holy Spirit to remember Your holy law, statutes, and just decrees and walk in them according to Your will and in this way show reverence for Your holy name which You have bestowed upon us in Baptism.

Lord God heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts to You in prayer, trusting in Your help. You have promised to be our keeper – to guard our going out and coming in from this time forth and forever more. And so we ask that You would be with and uphold those who are ill. Grant them healing according to Your will.

We ask Your blessing upon our national economy and upon our own jobs and financial well-being. Direct the unemployed to useful labour that will provide their needs. Lead us to be generous to those who are suffering economic hardships. Sustain in us all a strong work ethic so that we might provide for our families, help those in need, and give generously for the work of the church. Help us to not grow weary in doing good.

Give us an ongoing awareness that this world and the things of this world will not endure forever, but there will come a Last Day. In the midst of natural disasters and socio-economic distress and political uncertainty, help us to see these events as signs of the end so that that day would not catch us unaware but that instead we would recognize that our redemption is drawing near.

Bless Your church on earth. Protect us from false teachers who would deceive by Your name and lead us astray. Help us to always hold fast to the firm foundation of

Your Word. In the mist of uncertain times, grant us the mouth and the wisdom to bear witness to Your Son Jesus Christ and the redemption we have in Him.

Blessed God, we ask your care for those who are victims of wars and insurrections, may they not be terrified; for Nations rising against nations, let Your love, steadfast and faithful, be a great sign from heaven, may Your peace bend our will to your will, like trees in a strong wind.

Grant your healing grace to the victims of great earthquakes, famines and plagues; let Your love, steadfast and faithful, be a great sign from heaven, may Your peace bend our will to your will, like trees in a strong wind.

When we are weary, help us to do what is right. Do not let us be led astray, help us to come, in Your name, praising Your goodness. Let Your love, steadfast and faithful, be a great sign from heaven, may Your peace bend our will to your will, like trees in a strong wind.

We thank you for all the blessings of this life. For the gift of life. For the gift of Christ, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for your tender mercy. For Your saving love. Let Your love, steadfast and faithful, be a great sign from heaven, may Your peace bend our will to your will, like trees in a strong wind.

Dear heavenly Father, whatever else You see that we need—whatever is for the good of our neighbor and redounds to Your glory—we pray that You would grant to us, Your children. We ask it Jesus' name who taught us to pray:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

May you go into your week with your ears pitched to the sound of God's voice calling your name; with your eyes peeled for the face of Jesus in unexpected places; with your soul poised to receive the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Peace. And may

grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ His Son, in truth and love. **Amen.**