

Scripture Study

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Malachi 3:19-20a (or 4:1-2a)

(Ps 98:5-9)

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Luke 21:5-19

Overview of the Gospel:

- As in last weeks Gospel reading, Jesus is in Jerusalem for his final Passion and has been speaking publicly in the Temple.
- This reconstructed Temple, begun under Herod the Great around 20 B.C., was completed only seven years before it was destroyed under the hand of the Romans by fire in 70 A.D. To the Jews it was virtually the center of their world and to them its destruction would be equated with the end of the world.
- After Jesus predicts the Temple's destruction (verse 6), he retires with his disciples to the Mount of Olives (or "Olivet") just outside Jerusalem (Matthew 24:3). They then question him as to when and how they are to know this is taking place.
- The purpose of Jesus' words in this portion of the Olivet Discourse is not to satisfy the curiosity or as a blueprint or timetable for the "End Times," but to protect his disciples from being discouraged and scandalized about trials and persecutions that are sure to come (verses 8-9, 34; Acts 4:3; 5:18; 8:3; 12:4; 16:23; 25:23—26:32).

Questions:

- In the first reading, the prophet Malachi (the name means "my messenger") contrasts the fates of two kinds of people. What are these two groups? Which group are you in right now—even a little bit? What blessings will be received from moving resolutely toward the second group?
- In the second reading, St. Paul may be addressing the issue of people who think the "End Times" are so near, they have stopped working. What is wrong with this attitude?
- What prompts this lesson by Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel? What question(s) is he asked?
- What bombshell does he drop on his disciples (verse 6)? Considering how the Jews felt about the Temple, how must they have felt when they heard Jesus' words?
- The disciples identified the destruction of the Temple with the end of the world; in this chapter, Jesus separates the events. In verses 8-19, which is he teaching about?
- What will happen to the disciples and the Church during the coming persecution (verses 10-13)? What comfort will come in the midst of these trials?
- How would you apply this passage (verses 12-19) to your present situation with relatives, friends or neighbors? How is Jesus asking you to prepare for resistance from these people? If you have ever met genuine resistance or persecution, how did you give testimony?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 675, 585-86, 161, 2612, 2849

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

When we find ourselves in some grave danger we must not lose courage but firmly trust in God, for where there is the greatest danger, there is also the greatest help from Him who wants to be called our 'Help' in times of peace and in times of tribulation. --St. Ambrose

"By your endurance you will gain your lives"

Scripture: *Luke 21:5-19*

Meditation: Do you recognize God's action and signs in the world today? Jesus foretold many signs of God's action and judgment. To the great consternation of the Jews, Jesus prophesied the destruction of their temple at Jerusalem. The Jewish people took great pride in their temple, a marvel of the ancient world. The foretelling of this destruction was a dire judgment in itself. They sought Jesus for a sign that would indicate when this would occur. Jesus admonished them to not seek signs but rather to seek God's kingdom. There will be plenty of signs – such as wars, famines, diseases, tidal waves and earthquakes – pointing to God's ultimate judgment.

Jesus' prophecy is a two-edged sword, because it points not only to God's judgment, but also to his saving action and mercy. Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the dire consequences for all who would reject him and his saving message. While the destruction of Jerusalem's temple was determined (it was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.), there remained for its inhabitants a narrow open door leading to deliverance. Jesus says: "I am the door; whoever enters by me will be saved" (John 10:9). Jesus willingly set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that he would meet betrayal, rejection, and death on a cross. His death on the cross, however, brought about victory and salvation, not only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for all – both Jew and gentile – who would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Is your life securely



submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ?

If the gospel message is good news, then why do so many oppose it with hostility and even violence? Jesus warns his followers that they will be confronted with persecution, wickedness, false teaching, and temptation. The real enemy of the gospel is Satan who uses fear and hatred to provoke hostility in others towards those who follow Christ. And what is Jesus' response to this hostility and opposition? Love and truth. Only love can defeat prejudice, intolerance, and hatred. God's love purifies our hearts and minds of all that would divide and tear people apart. The truth is also essential for overcoming evil and tribulation in the world. Satan deceives and sin blinds the heart and mind. Only God's truth can free us from error and spiritual blindness. This gospel is God's word of truth and salvation. That is why Jesus tells his disciples to proclaim the gospel throughout the whole world, even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

Jesus tells his disciples that if they endure to the end they will gain their lives – they will see God's salvation and inherit eternal life and happiness with God.

Endurance is more than human effort and perseverance. It is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to bear up under trials, temptations, and persecution. Endurance is strengthened with hope – the supernatural assurance that we will see God face to face and inherit all the promises he has made. Jesus is our supreme model and hero who endured the cross for our sake (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus willingly shed his blood for our sake and for our salvation and he calls us to love and to die to ourselves in like manner.

God may call some of us to be martyrs for our faith. But for most of us, our call is to be 'dry' martyrs who bear testimony to the joy and power of the gospel in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and adversities which come our way as we follow the Lord. What most attracts others to the truth and power of the gospel? When they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries. God will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Are you eager to bear witness to the joy and freedom of the gospel?

"Lord Jesus, by your cross you have redeemed the world. Fill me with joy and confidence and make me a bold witness of your saving truth that others may know the joy and freedom of the gospel."

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