

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

## Sermon November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### *God's Kingdom Come*

Jesus can see the writing on the wall. The violent rebellion is gaining traction, as more and more people are upset of the way the Empire and their puppet government are running things. And the emperor is only so patient. Eventually he will call in his soldiers to come into Jerusalem and seize it. Destroying everything the Israelites hold dear to them including the Temple that the disciples are admiring.

Pain and suffering are coming Jesus foretells. These are signs that they are living in the end times Jesus tells them. Jesus invites them to look for these signs.

We often focus a lot of our attention on this section of the gospel. We look for these signs in our world today. Many people interpret these times as the end times. Natural disasters are more intense (**Image**). Injustice runs rampant. Wars are happening all over the world. Polarization is resurfacing some fears within us of the potential for another world war. Then there is all the inner strife we are seeing within families. Within faith communities.

Now, we are not the first generation to experience such pain. Many generations before us could see these signs, and believed the world was coming to an end. I'm sure the people who grew up during the two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have thought likewise (**Image**). As did the Christians and Jews who grew up in the first century common era under the Roman Empire where they were experiencing many violent conflicts including a revolt that led to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years after Jesus' death.

So, like previous generations, we take Jesus' words seriously. We focus on these signs. We focus on the pain and suffering in our world. Sometimes more so than we probably should.

For many of us seeing the pain and suffering in our world leaves us wrestling with feelings of anxiety and fear. We question God (**Image**). We question humanity. Sometimes we find ourselves feeling helpless or even despair for our future. Our focus can easily lead to us having this doomsday feeling. That the world and everything in it is out of control. And that soon we will see the big kaboom. The end of the world as we know it.

Depending on how we read the book of Revelation these thoughts may come with hope, relief. Or these thoughts may come with more anxiety and fear.

What is ironic is that when Jesus shares these words with his disciples, he isn't trying to scare them or lead them into feeling helpless about the fate of the world. Why would Jesus spend all his time training these people if the world was just going to end right away?

Jesus believes there will be a purpose for the church, and that the church will need to continue to reveal God's healing and redemption in a suffering world (**Image**).

This has been the church's mission throughout the generations as God's creation faces suffering in this world. To reveal to people that God is present. God is working in this world to redeem it from suffering.

This message isn't lost for the disciples when hearing what Jesus has to say. Yes, we will suffer living in this broken world. But where there is suffering there is God working. We see this most evidently at the cross of Christ. What looks like a moment of defeat and a grave injustice is actually a moment of forgiveness and transformation for all people.

What the disciples learn by following Jesus. What we learn is that God's kingdom has come through Christ Jesus. The world isn't what it was before. Christ has changed it. Christ has given us all hope that these sufferings only last for a moment. God's healing and redemption is forever.

Jesus is encouraging his disciples to connect with their suffering in a way that helps them see their suffering as only a momentary lapse in time. That like the pain that comes with child birth, the joy of holding that child for the first time is just a moment away.

Now, never giving birth to a child, I find it hard to comment on the magnitude of pain you women feel when going through the labour process. From a third-party perspective, it looks overwhelming, and I am probably understating it. It also looks like it can feel like the pain lasts forever.

For many of us, when we suffer from a lot of pain, we have trouble seeing the light at the end of the tunnel (**Image**). All we can focus on is the pain. But what Jesus encourages us to do, is also focus on the promise.

Jesus isn't telling us to deny our pain or to think it away. Jesus invites us to see our pain. To feel our pain. Jesus is there to shed tears with us. Our theology of the cross helps us see that Jesus' suffering on the cross brings us closer to a God who understands our suffering. A God who suffers with us.

But Jesus also invites us not to lose sight of the promise. Believe that this pain only lasts for a moment. That the joyous cries of your newborn child will be heard (**Image**). That you will experience healing and redemption from your suffering.

And that our whole world will one day experience this healing and redemption in its fullness.

We long for this day. Especially, in recent days, where we have witnessed so much suffering. But Jesus doesn't dedicate his time and his teachings to us so we can sit on this promise. Jesus encourages us to see where God is working in the now. Where God's kingdom has already touched our lives.

Jesus invites us to follow him (**Image**). To keep living out the gospel helping people see where God is at work in their lives and in our world to heal and redeem it in the here and now. Not just at some future date.

When Luther was asked what to do if the world were to end tomorrow, he replied, "plant a tree." (**Image**)

And so, Jesus' words to us this morning give us hope that wherever we suffer God is there at work, healing and redeeming us. Jesus' words invite us to be the church in this suffering world. Helping people see where God is at work in the here and now. Jesus' words leave us with a promise that one day suffering will be no more. God's healing and redemption will transform this world into something new. All we need to do is wait a little longer.

Let us pray, gracious God, heal our world. Breathe new life into us. Give us what we need to reveal your healing and redeeming work to all the world. And give us hope that one day we will experience the full measure of your promise. **Amen.**

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