

I am going to share something personal; I am a person who likes routines and schedules. Since I have been your curate for over a year, you have probably already recognized this fact. My daughters are so accustomed to this routine that they will tell you: if I am not there when they wake-up, I am out running. It is part of my routine. I think my desire to know the plan and what would happen is part of what draw me to the Episcopal Church: Each year has seasons: The year begins with the first Sunday in Advent and progresses through Epiphany, Lent, Easter (which of course is an entire season as all of you know), Pentecost, and ends with the season after Pentecost or Ordinary Time. We have a lectionary consisting of three sets of readings, within those each week has a lesson.

We are currently nearing the end of this last season and the lessons are becoming more reflective as we near Advent One. Next Sunday, known as Christ the King Sunday, we will hear about Jesus being crucified and all the readings we have had for the past few weeks are pointing us toward that reality.

Last week, we heard about the resurrection. Today, in Luke 21, we hear a discussion about eternal and final justice. If the thought of the final judgment and the resurrection are not causing pause in your life, it may be time to stop and think. Our connection with God is reflected in our lives and thoughts. Advent will be a reflective somewhat penitential season. As we prepare for our new Christian year, it is good to reflect on how our lives mirror the faithful. This week is a time to focus on perseverance.

Our reading from Luke's Gospel also appears in Mark and Matthew; they give additional information, the disciples were walking along together and observed the temple in Matthew and Mark, while in Luke, someone was merely talking about the temple. Matthew and Mark give context: Matthew and Mark point out that Jesus and his twelve disciples have this conversation as they are walking away. Solomon built a temple that was destroyed and rebuilt 50 years later and then again destroyed.

It was rededicated and then Herod the Great enlarged the Temple building. The temple was huge.¹ Holding onto this temple image a bit, it is important to note that the disciples saw themselves inextricably linked to the temple. This spirit of desolation brought about reminders of their past mistakes as a collective people of faith. Just as we, as Christians, have had times when we did not live up to our ideas in faith, the Israelites also had these times.

To see this, we only need to look at our first reading of the day from Malachi. "See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."² The prophet Malachi was written around 5 BCE by a prophet without a name. He is called Malachi because of a phrase within the book. This prophet is writing after Solomon's temple has been destroyed and before the Israelites have reformed their community.

The reason that Malachi tells us of the damnation of evildoers is because God has laid a case for the unfortunate choices of the Israelites. It is like I always tell my girls: unfortunate choices lead to unfortunate consequences. The years have gone forward, however, Jesus wants the disciples to know that evil will persist. Jesus is calling on his disciples to be prepared for the worst to come, even the unimaginable destruction of the temple.

¹ Hendriksen, W. (1978). *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. pp.

² Malachi 4:1

The spirit of perseverance is the only way in which faith will succeed. The Beatitudes showcased the fact that God will lift us up when we are at our weakest. Now, we hear that there will be a time of great war and false prophets; and still we must persevere knowing God's love will lift us up.

Part of the reason that the temple was going to be torn down is that it no longer stood for good. Just as in the days of Malachi, what was meant for good had turned into perversion. It was no longer only a place of holiness and reflection, instead the temple had become a place where people sold for profit.

Unlike our bookstore those profits lined pockets rather than fed the poor.³ Jesus, as our God has a prophetic nature to him. He is warning his disciples and through them their later followers (that is us) that we are to begin reflecting our faith in our actions. We are to do this more than we think necessary and even when it is hard.

When thinking of the temple, instead of seeing beauty, Jesus saw that the poor behavior of the money changers was going to lead to war. Our negative human actions, our sins, which eventually lead to destruction.⁴

Jesus' warning to us is that we need to persevere in finding ways to be righteous, good, and kind. When others are profiting off of ill-gotten gains; we are to live into the knowledge that God is hopeful. Peace will come when Jesus returns. Until then, we hold onto the scriptures that remind us to be Christ's light in the world. Jesus promises in Luke that there will be better times for those who persevere, "You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."⁵ We have to keep trying to act lovingly according to God's ways. Through Jesus' words we are reminded that when we need it the Holy Spirit will come to bring us the words and thoughts that we need; that Christ will be incarnate in us.

We can look to scripture passages such as this one to remember that even in the difficult times, Jesus will hold us in his heart. Our souls, the part of us that is connected to God eternally is safe. In *The Message*, a colloquial translation of the Bible, Eugene Peterson translates the last portion we read today in Luke as, "Staying with it—that's what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry; you'll be saved." I love this idea. In the end, our eternal souls will be saved and we will not be sorry for it.

In 2021, I had the blessing of attending the Lord of the Streets Luncheon. The speaker, Chris Wilson, spoke about how growing up in Washington D.C. he saw little hope for himself and began a life of unfortunate choices. By eighteen he was in prison for life for murder. What could have led to a ruined young life. Instead, Mr. Wilson turned his life around in prison: he graduated from college, began mentoring and eventually began to pray for others and himself. Eventually, his life turned around. Wilson's faith persisted. He wrote an [entire book](#) about his experiences. The message is clear: keep praying, keep loving, keep persevering, and keep shining Christ's light in the world. Amen.

³ Wright, N.T. (2001). *Luke for Everyone*. London: SPCK.

⁴ Thomas, D. (2019). <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2451-by-your-endurance>

⁵ Luke 21:19