

What End Will Come?

Mark 13:1-13

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost, November 15, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Some passages just need to be explained.

When Jesus makes His predictions in the Gospel reading for today, He is answering a question that Peter, James, John, and Andrew put to Him. He says that the great buildings of Jerusalem will be destroyed. There will not be one stone here left on another that will not be thrown down. Peter, James, John, and Andrew want to know, "When will these things take place and what will be the sign that they are about to happen?"

That is the question that our Lord is answering in this passage. Please do not confuse this passage with what our Lord says in similar passages in Matthew and in Luke. Matthew and Luke record the Lord answering one more question besides this one, but in Mark's Gospel so far as we read this morning all the Lord is answering is when will the buildings that form the temple complex in Jerusalem be torn down.

Our Lord then makes His predictions.

First of all, there will be people who come in the name of Jesus who are false. They will speak in the name of Jesus. They will preach in the name of Jesus. But Jesus did not send them. Jesus did not command what they say. Some of them will even claim to be Jesus Himself, but that will not be true either. Jesus warns them in advance so that when that happens they will not be deceived by these imposters. When these imposters come claiming to come in Jesus' name or claiming to be Jesus Himself, that is a sign that the buildings that form the temple complex in Jerusalem are about to come down.

Secondly, Peter, James, John, and Andrew are going to hear about wars and rumors of wars. That means that they will hear about war coming to their own countries of Galilee and Judea. It also means that they will hear reports of wars coming in other places. Our Lord is not specific about what the nature of these wars are, but in any war there is devastation and death and so our Lord tells them not to be disturbed because it is necessary for these things to happen. The reason that it is necessary for these things to happen is because the temple complex will be destroyed in a war.

Thirdly, when the temple complex is about to be destroyed there will be nations that arise against other nations in order to fight them. The result will be famine. In addition our Lord predicts that there will be earthquakes when these things take place. Our Lord tells Peter, John, James, and Andrew that these are only the beginning of the birth pains. Worse things are about to happen.

Fourthly, our Lord specifically makes predictions about what is going to happen to Peter, James, John, and Andrew. He says that they will be handed over to the Sanhedrin. For those of you who do not know what the Sanhedrin is, it is the Jewish ruling council. When the Romans conquered a territory, they allowed the local governments of those territories to continue operating. If they conquered a king, the king was permitted to continue to rule over his kingdom. The only difference was that he had to answer to Caesar, garrison his troops, and pay taxes to Caesar. If the king did those things, he could remain in power over his territory. When the Romans conquered Judea there was no king. The Jews had a ruling council of elders that made decisions for their territory and governed it. Once the Romans conquered Judea, they allowed the Jewish ruling council to continue to run Judea as they saw fit as long as they paid their taxes to Caesar, housed Caesar's troops on their territory, and did whatever else it was that Caesar wanted. Judea was unique in that it refused to allow the emperor's image to be erected in the temple which every other territory in the empire accepted. Judea also did not like Roman rule and frequently

rebelled against it. As a result Caesar would allow kings to reign in Judea like Herod the Great in order to keep the Jews in line. Sometimes when that did not work, Caesar would send in a Roman governor like Pontius Pilate to keep things in line. The king or the governor would have to work out with the Jewish ruling council how they were going to govern Judea together. This Jewish ruling council was called the Sanhedrin.

What our Lord is predicting is that Peter, James, John, and Andrew would be handed over to the Sanhedrin. The word "handed over" implies that they would be in trouble with the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin would have the authority to imprison or have them beaten or maybe even turn them over to Pilate for execution. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew get handed over to the Sanhedrin, that is a sign that the temple in Jerusalem is about to come down.

Our Lord predicts that Peter, James, John, and Andrew will be beaten in the synagogues. He predicts that they will stand before governors and kings on account of Jesus. He predicts that when they stand in front of these governors and kings that Peter, James, John, and Andrew will bear witness to Jesus. Because of that He tells them not to worry about beforehand what they will say. Rather He tells them that it will be given to them what to say in that hour. It will not be them speaking. It will rather be the Holy Spirit that is speaking through them. When this happens to Peter, James, John, and Andrew, that is the sign that the temple in Jerusalem is about to be destroyed.

Sixthly, our Lord predicts that the Gospel will be preached to all nations. Our Lord is speaking in something of a grandiose manner here. We moderns interpret this differently than the way that Peter, James, John, and Andrew would have heard it. They would have understood the Lord to have meant that the Gospel would have gone out to all nations in the area and all nations under Roman domination. In other words the Gospel would be preached to all of the nations of which they were aware. That would be a sign that the temple in Jerusalem was about to come down.

Seventhly, when the temple in Jerusalem would be about to come down, brother would betray brother to death. A father would betray his children to death. Children would arise against their parents and have them put to death. When that happens the temple in Jerusalem is coming down.

Finally, our Lord predicts that everyone would hate Peter, James, John, and Andrew because of the name of Jesus. That would be dismaying. In the face of hatred Peter, James, John, and Andrew might give up the faith. Because Jesus knows them He reminds them that the one who endures to the end will be saved. That is to say that if Peter, James, John, and Andrew remain faithful to Jesus until their deaths, they will be saved.

That is what the passage is talking about.

In other Gospels like Matthew and Luke, it stands recorded that the disciples also asked Jesus about His coming. Mark does not deal with that question. All that our Lord is answering in Mark's Gospel is what the signs will be the temple is about to be destroyed.

Now our Lord's words were fulfilled in the year 70. In the years leading up to AD70 the Jews rebelled against Roman authority. The Romans eventually marched on Jerusalem and burned it and the temple to the ground. Not one stone was left on top of another. The only thing that remained was the Wailing Wall that is still in Jerusalem today and that is not a wall of the temple proper but a retaining wall of one of the adjoining rooms to the temple. In other words it is all that remains of the temple complex. It stands as a memorial to this day of the truth of the words that our Lord speaks.

When AD70 occurred there were many who either claimed to be Jesus or they claimed to be sent by Jesus. What our Lord meant by that is clearer in the fulfillment. When the Jews rebelled against Roman authority there were many who claimed to be the Christ. They claimed to be the Christ in order to lead

the Jews in revolt against the Romans. Either that or they claimed to be sent by the Christ in order to lead the Jews in revolt against the Roman authority.

Obviously when the Jews revolt and the Romans begin marching their troops against Jerusalem, there are wars and reports of wars. Famines followed the war as they always do. People starved to death. Earthquakes are also reported at that time by the ancient historians.

Obviously nation arose against nation. The Jews were in revolt against the Romans. But anyone paying attention to the time knew that there were other nations rising against Rome, the Persians for example.

By the time the temple was destroyed the things that Jesus predicted would happen to Peter, James, John, and Andrew had occurred. They had been handed over to the Sanhedrin. The book of Acts in the Bible itself records this taking place. They had been beaten in the synagogues. The Book of Acts does not specifically record this of all of the apostles, but it records it of enough of them to infer that it happened to all of them the way that our Lord predicted. The apostle wound up in front of kings and governors. Just read the book of Acts and you will see that it took place. Again details are not always given on these specific four men, but it happened to the apostles routinely enough that it is easy to infer that it happened to all of them. The Holy Spirit did teach them what to say when they stood in front of these authorities. Again the Book of Acts tells you of the apostles standing in front of governors and kings and bearing witness to Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit that was speaking through them. And the Book of Acts records the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and the beginning of their preaching ministry. The apostles took the Gospel to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire and beyond. It is possible that by this time the Gospel had reached from Spain to India.

When the Romans marched on Jerusalem, they came in order to put down a revolt. They were there to clean house. They wanted to round up the Jews who led the revolt and kill them. In this kind of an environment everyone fears for their lives. Everyone is terrified of the authority. And everyone wants to take advantage of the authority in order to get rid of people that they don't like. So when the Romans marched on Jerusalem to destroy it brother did betray brother to death. Fathers did betray their children and children did betray their parents and have them put to death. That is the in record of history.

And finally, many people, sufficient numbers to make it feel like everyone, did hate Peter, James, John, and Andrew and the other apostles and the other believers in Jesus because of the name of Jesus.

The prediction of Jesus came to pass just like He said that it would. The temple is destroyed. Not one stone is left on another. What happened to Peter, James, John, and Andrew is recorded by history in fulfillment of our Lord's words in addition to everything else that He said.

Now, what has this got to do with us?

First of all, Mark's Gospel is not talking about the end of the world. Mark does not record the answer to the disciples' questions about the end of the world. If you want to read our Lord's answer to that question, you will have to consult the gospels of Matthew or Luke. So all of these things that our Lord lists may or may not be signs of the end of the age and of His imminent return.

The president has increased American troop involvement in Syria in an effort to put down ISIS. A terrorist organization of some kind has attacked Paris. Ok. That is the report of a war. America has been involved in wars throughout her history. That would be a war itself as opposed to a report of a war. There are famines. There are earthquakes. That is true. But how many of us are handed over to the Sanhedrin? The Sanhedrin does not exist anymore. How many Christians are drug into synagogues and beaten? I do not know of any, do you? I suppose that some of us stand before kings and governors to bear witness about Christ, but not all of us do. And the Gospel has been preached to practically every nation

on earth and the end has not yet arrived. The predictions that our Lord makes in the Gospel reading today are predictions that are designed to tell Peter, James, John, and Andrew when the temple would be destroyed. The end of the world and our Lord's return in glory are a whole other subject that our Lord takes up later in the chapter.

So this passage does tell us that our Lord has an uncanny ability to predict the future. He knows what the future holds. In fact He knows it so well that some false prophets have said that Mark inserted these words into the mouth of Jesus after the temple was destroyed in order to make it look like our Lord could prophesy. That just demonstrates how accurate our Lord was in His predictions. If our Lord is right about the destruction of Jerusalem, then our Lord is going to be right about all of the other things that He says as well. Our Lord was right when He predicted His crucifixion. Our Lord was right when He predicted His resurrection. Our Lord was right when He predicted the destruction of the temple. When you see the Jews praying in front of the Wailing Wall and waving back and forth in their prayers I want you to think to yourself, my Lord was right. He was right about everything that He said. That means that He is also right when He says that anyone who endures to the end will be saved.

Secondly, this also means that the temple in Jerusalem is unnecessary when it comes to worshipping God. Let me say that again. The temple in Jerusalem is unnecessary when it comes to worshipping God. There are many false prophets today who insist that the temple is necessary for worshipping God and that the temple will be rebuilt before the Lord returns. All this does is give impenitent sinners a false sense of security causing them to believe that they can put off repenting of their sins until the temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem. But since our Lord Himself predicted that not one stone would be left on another, He makes the temple irrelevant to the worship of God. In fact He tells the woman at the well that the time was coming when people would not worship in Jerusalem at the temple, but rather would worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Jesus our Lord offers Himself as the new temple in which God is worshipped. Our Lord offers His own body as the temple where God is worshipped. In John 2 He says that His body is the temple and proves it by rising from the dead on the third day. Wherever the body of Jesus is at that is where the temple is at. In other words, that is where the presence of God is at. After all Colossians 2:9 says that in Christ all the fullness of the deity dwells in bodily form.

Furthermore the Word of God declares that you, the Christian congregation, are the body of Christ. Therefore God resides in you. He resides in your bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit, 1Corinthians 6 and He resides in congregation because you like living stones are being built together into a holy temple where God dwells by His Spirit, Ephesians 2 and 1Peter 2.

The reason that I took the time to explain all of this is because there is a lot of confusion out there about passages like this one. I want you know that the true temple is Christ's body wherever that is and that is where the Gentiles stream unto Zion like the prophets of the Old Testament predict. You will be streaming here momentarily. And also I explain this to warn you, the Lord may return at any time. The one who endures to the end will be saved.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.