

Luke 21:5-19

The end of the Church Year is fast approaching – one more week to go.

As we follow the lectionary for this year, Jesus is in Jerusalem during what we know as Holy Week.

And the setting today is the Temple.

Luke tells us that some of those around Jesus were admiring the beauty of this ornate setting.

From a historical perspective, the first Temple, built by Solomon was destroyed in 586 BC during the Babylonian Captivity.

The Second Temple was completed in 515 BC.

Now, Herod the Great was enlarging and refurbishing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple.

Jesus said, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

The reality is that in 70 AD the Roman Army under Flavius Silva did destroy this Temple.

The stark reality of this became clear to me as I stood at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem composed of the massive foundation stones of the Temple – all that was left.

Returning to the time of today’s Gospel, those around Jesus wanted details – “When will this take place and what signs will point to it?”

Jesus doesn’t give them the answer they want.

Rather he issues a series of 3 imperatives:

1. Do not be led astray;
2. Do not go;
3. Do not be terrified.

These imperatives derive from a deeper concern of Jesus about how his followers should react to persecution which will confront them in the time ahead as they go forth in his name. (Book of Acts)

Today it is true to say that we live in difficult times – polarization of political parties; a cacophony of religious interpretations, and the specter of Christian Nationalism.

Jesus' imperatives to his disciples in Luke still have application today.

Do not be led astray by voices that preach a society where some are in and others are excluded. The proclamation of Christian Nationalism is a contemporary expression of this.

Jesus calls for a community that transcends social barriers, cares for its least privileged, and confronts abuses of power and wealth. (IB, vol IX)

Our Baptismal Covenant is foundational to this way of life. And John Denver in his One World Album talks about our being interconnected with each other in these words from one of his songs:

"There is a man who is my brother; I just don't know his name..."

Don't go after (follow) anyone who would proclaim a way of life that demeans another.

Do not be terrified by adversity,

for the Gospel offers the spiritual resources to cope with adversity and hardship.

John Michael Talbot, in one of his songs, catches the essence of this in these words:

"Be not afraid; I go before you always. Come and follow me, and I will give you rest."

And Canticle 9 in the BCP tells us that

"Surely, it is God who saves me, I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior."

These are words to take to heart as we end this current Church Year.

Let them be as well the foundation of our pilgrimage of faith in the new year to come so that we may grow ever more deeply in the knowledge and love of the Lord.