



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO GROW

Mark 13:1-8, 24-37 (NRSV)

“ As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!’ 2Then Jesus asked him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.’

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?’ 5Then Jesus began to say to them, ‘Beware that no one leads you astray. 6Many will come in my name and say, “I am he!” and they will lead many astray. 7When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

24 ‘But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. 27Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 ‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 ‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

REFLECTION POINTS 29 MARCH 2020

It would be so easy right now to focus on what appears to be the end time message here. A question some Christian groups are asking at the moment is if we are living through the end time now? I’d suggest that’s the wrong question.

The symbol I see in today’s text is the rocks and stones – they remind me of Jesus in the desert and Satan’s temptation, Peter as the rock of the church, rocks thrown at ‘sinners’. They also remind me of the worship song we often sing in church, ‘For you deep stillness’ written by Robin Mann and Julie Perrin:

*For you, deep stillness of the silent inland
For you, deep blue of the desert skies
For you, flame red of the rocks and stones
For you, sweet water from hidden springs.*

*From the edges seek the heartlands
and when you’re burnt by the journey
may the cool winds of the hovering
Spirit soothe and replenish you.*

*In the name of Christ,
In the name of Christ*

To listen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lkUOXCNRc>

The reading is describing the Roman practice of dismantling temples during their occupation of Greece and moving them. They may use the stones in other building projects – the Romans were great recyclers! But what they were also doing was destroying the local culture and belief system.

By the time Mark writes this text, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem is no more. It had been destroyed by the Romans as an act of war. The stones, according to writings from that time, were huge. Jesus tells the disciples that even these huge stones will be knocked down. But the text goes on to explain that all of this is earthly power, not from God. The Romans may demolish the symbol of Jewish faith, the tem-

ple, but they cannot destroy faith. They may reuse the stones elsewhere in their own pagan projects, but they have no power over God.

The reality of the end times is that, when it is time, it'll happen so quickly that we won't know famine, earthquake, plague or any other misfortune. That's the whole point of being always ready. There's no point having a magnificent temple in which to worship God if our hearts are not ready to meet God. Mark and the early church believed this time was almost upon them – we know it's taking a bit longer.

But I said at the beginning that those who were asking if this is the end time now were asking the wrong question. I feel a better question would be are our hearts ready to meet God? If not, there's some work to be done. Perhaps we could all take this time of physical isolation to ponder upon this question and take the time to make adjustments in our lives.

Isaiah 41:10

do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.