

St Alkmund's Whitchurch 16 November 2025
Luke 21.5-19
Reverend Beverley Jameson

PRAYER

Father may these spoken words be faithful to the written word and lead us into the living word, Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen

SERMON

I have been to Isreal and the West Bank several times over the years and I have seen the enormous platform that housed the temple and been on top of the temple mount looking over Jerusalem where today the Al-Aqsa Mosque stands.

The temple was the centre of the Jewish world. It dominated the city and was vast in its proportions. Recent excavations in Jerusalem have uncovered stone of immense size, one 15m in length and 2.5m high 49 feet x8ft. The temple with all its finery must have seemed invincible. so must have been the incredulity; the disbelief of the inner circle of disciples listening to Jesus say the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Jesus had given several warnings of disaster and misery to come, now he was warning those core of disciples. The warnings are in the form of a coming judgement introduced by the prophesy of the destruction of the temple, a prophesy which was to come true in the life time of some of his hearers. In 70 AD the Romans did destroy the temple, smashing the walls and hurling the immense stones to the ground with such force that they broke through the pavements to subterranean passages below.

The disciples believed the destruction of the temple would introduce the end times. In Jewish belief the term "end of days" is a reference to the coming of the messiah who will usher in peace and unity for all mankind, in the service of one God. It had long been talked of in the Old Testament scriptures. The disciples like any good Jew would know these scripture verses and they are understandably afraid of what is to come, they ask Jesus for signs as to when the end times will occur. And Jesus gives warnings but not a date

- Beware of plausible people pretending to be the messiah Jesus said
- There will be wars and rumours of war. Jesus disciples (and we Christians) are not to be unduly alarmed as the end time is approaching but will not follow immediately. He then lists many more events that are to take place – war between nations and kingdoms, earthquakes plagues floods droughts and famines

As the disciples wait for all of this to happen the disciples will be persecuted. They will be delivered up to governors and kings and they must speak of their faith and of Jesus teaching. They need not worry what to say as Jesus will speak through them. Even more disheartening than political opposition and persecution, will be betrayal by their

loved ones and family. Proclaiming the gospel will not make the apostles popular; on the contrary they will be hated on account of the one who sent them.

Gloom, doom and despondency all round I fear

In our world seemingly bent of self-destruction, where wars and conflicts rage, where famines and droughts devastate the land, it must seem to some that the end of time is approaching. Last week we held the Civic Remembrance Sunday service here and I think my grandfather who was injured at Ypres and those at the Somme and Passchendaele during the First World War must have thought it was the end of times, but it wasn't. Those at Normandy and at Dunkirk during the second World War and the civilians at home facing bombs and fires in major cities must have thought it was the end of times, but it wasn't. We do not know when the end time will be upon us and when Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead as God's kingdom will emerge in peace and unity for all mankind. The best advice we can follow is that given by Jesus to his disciples - to be watchful. Not to follow the false prophets claiming to be the messiah, to live our lives as Jesus taught us to live, to follow his teaching, his commandments to

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

As Christians we try to follow Jesus and what he said about loving God and loving our neighbours. We don't always get it right, but we try we try to follow Jesus' teaching Sometimes that means going against what the world may say or do and that can be hard, to stand out in the crowd, not to join in the banter at work, in a social group at school when we know it is hurtful and wrong. We will not be persecuted as the disciples were but sometimes that means we may be ridiculed for the beliefs and values we hold, but we have to speak truth to power, we have to be faithful to Jesus' teaching. We need not worry what to say as the promise Jesus made to the disciples 2000 years ago is a promise to us too, he will give us the words to say.

To be ready for the end times, means we have to live every day of our lives as if tomorrow was the end time. To be Christ's hands and voice and light in this dreary and dismal world. We do not know when the end time will come, but we need to focus on being in Christ all aspects of our lives, in all situations whether the end time is upon us or not

We should not be afraid of the end times because the promise Jesus made to the disciples at the end of our Gospel reading is a promise to us too- by our endurance we will gain our souls

AMEN