

“Where Do We Put Our Trust?”

Mark 13: 1-8

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The Structures in Life will fall. One day, all the structures and buildings we are so familiar with in our lives will fall. These things are often trusted and give us meaning, purpose and security. However, life does change. Our loved ones die, people will disappoint you; relationships break up, we get sick. Those structures in life will come to an end. Our great temples will be turned to rubble.

We are all ‘temple builders’. Examples of temples we build for ourselves would be our successes, our wealth, the persona we promote, our reputation, our beliefs and opinions. We build these things with the idea that they will sustain our lives. We have the temptation to build temples/structures with the thought that they will provide ultimate meaning, and security for our lives.

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!”² Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” (Mark 13: 1-2) The temple that the disciples and Jesus were walking alongside of was more than merely a building where Jewish people worshipped. It was the centre of Jewish life and provided identity, structure and meaning to the people’s lives.

Looking only on outside appearances- Jesus’ disciples were impressed with the magnificence of the temple. They were only looking at the outside appearances of the great structure. The building was beautiful, but it was meant to be a means of pointing to God and to God’s love - not an end in itself.

Some used the temple in the opposite way. Jesus knew that the temple was to be a means of grace, not a means of injustice. With righteous anger, Jesus chased out the money changers who were taking advantage of the poor and the vulnerable by charging them exorbitant prices for doves when these powerless people had no other options. These vendors were using others to advance their own purposes, which goes directly against the purposes of God. Money had become their god. In their thinking, people no longer mattered. Jesus was making the point that the temple was only temporary. It was important as a means to build one’s trust in God- not to violate others.

⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸ For 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.

War, terrorism, earthquakes, floods, droughts, famine, tragic accidents are around us. Wars and terrorism divide people from one another. Natural disasters make us all feel vulnerable. The airline crashes make us feel unsafe. There seems to be little stability. So often we respond to these things with fear. It can shake the foundations in life on which we stand. As a response, we can come up with easy explanations and go on with our own life concentrating our efforts on trying to remain ‘safe’. Certainly the end of the many worlds we and others

have created does cause sadness and the losses are to be mourned. However, it is important not to cling on to them. In fear, our temptation is to shore up our temples and foundations after they fall, and put them all back together again. Though many of these things have a good purpose, Jesus does not want us to do that. Our spiritual work as Christians is not to be afraid of these losses, but to be faithful to his Kingdom. Remember what we pray in the Lord's Prayer: *Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Jesus calls us to be present and be concerned about the future, but not to worry. We are to pay attention to what is really going on.

Through these losses the essence of life is revealed to us. These temples and kingdoms we build here are not the point of life. They will fall away and will let us down. It is important that we let go of our illusions. These fallen temples of life reveals to us the truth and the reality about our self, about life, and the world we so often refuse to see. It is a painful process to see the temples fall – those things we put so much trust in.

Temples fall and this reality confronts us. At that point, we need to decide between reality and illusion – between life and death. These losses ask us hard questions about where we put our trust. When our temples fall, we are called to face our mortality and temporary existence in our bodies on earth, so that we might stand on the immortality of our souls and the permanence of our loving and gracious God. Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem and his death on the cross is the centre of history we are to refer to when destruction comes to our earthly temples and structures. Jesus' death and resurrection compels us to see beyond the temporal nature of things towards our God of Grace in who we can put our trust.

The death of others and ourselves; the death of all these temples and structures in life is not as much about loss as it is about birth and creation – in other words, making room for the God of life and not clinging on to temporary things. With the 'long-view' perspective we see God's hand in the new life and creation. It gives us hope and joy. We respond with giving thanks.

Asking the hard question of where do we put our trust. What temples are you holding on to for security? Where is your trust in God? When I was a young child (in the 1960's and early 70's) I watched with great interest (as many of you did) the launch of several of the Nasa Apollo missions to space and to the moon. It intrigued me how so little of the magnificent, huge rocket actually made it to the destination. As the rocket made its journey it discarded the beautiful structures it no longer needed. If those parts which helped get them to that part of the journey were not discarded, the rocket could not progress.

In remembering our God of love as revealed in Jesus Christ, we not only trust in the fact that the loss of the temples and structures in our life will not ultimately harm us, but that we are propelled forward by the Holy Spirit to work in hope to help others who are suffering- - emphasizing to them that the suffering they experience is not the end. The letting go of these temples and structures in life gives birth to the opportunity to let go of self-preservation and be empowered with hope to receive grace from God and dispense God's grace to others. Jesus asks: Where do we put our trust? We put our trust in the Lord. Amen.