

Luke: The Destruction of the Temple & End of the Age

Luke 21:5-38

the gospel according to

LUKE

Begin with Prayer

In silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then pray: *Empowering God, we pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to move us to understanding; to help us to believe the gospel; to give us strength and wisdom to live by it. Amen.* (Worship Sourcebook Q.3.5.8)

Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to check in with one another (2 minutes each).

1. *How much time do you spend each day or week on current events, and how do you get your news?*
2. *If given the choice, would you like to know what will happen to you in the next 10-20 years? Why or why not?*

Introduction

When we gather, our goal is to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. As you begin this week, remind your group to manage your time in a way that allows everyone to share, as well as leaves time for discussing prayer requests and praying without going too late.

Listening to God's Word

The world can be a beautiful place, full of harmony, joy, and adventure. It can also be deeply unsettling. War is an ever-present reality, people with power do what they want, disease and illness are never far enough away, the weather seems increasingly unstable, and we are in the middle of it all. In today's passage, Jesus warns his disciples that the future does not look good and that the Temple and Jerusalem will soon be destroyed. Despite this bad news, Jesus reminds them they are not forgotten or forsaken, but that they are the people God wants to be with.

Small Group Discussion

Read Luke 21:5-38. It's a long passage, so maybe take turns reading sections!

1. *What are your first thoughts when you read through this passage?*
2. The destruction of the Temple would have meant that the people, especially the leaders, had turned away from God (1 Kings 9:6-9). *How would this prophecy from Jesus have been received by the religious leaders? His disciples? The common people?*

Everything Jesus predicted about the Temple actually happened. In 66 AD the Jews led an insurrection against Rome. By 70 AD, the Roman army had quashed the rebellion and most of the Jewish soldiers and refugees left had fled to the walled city of Jerusalem. When the Romans finally broke through those defenses, everyone inside (including priests) was either killed or taken as slaves. The Temple was destroyed, the sacrifices stopped, and the place of God's presence and the symbol of His favor was now a heap of rubble.

3. If you skim through the passage again, Jesus is predicting some unpleasant things: persecution, arrest, betrayal, hatred, and even death, without any possibility of avoiding it. *What do you think the goal of Jesus saying this was?*

4. Skim the passage again and look at the commands that Jesus gave his disciples. *What would it take to do everything Jesus said (e.g. 'stand firm,' 'don't be frightened' and 'don't worry') in a season like this?*
5. *Have you experienced not just a difficult moment, but a difficult season? What was it like to try to 'stand firm' and 'not be afraid?'*
6. **Read Acts 7:55 - 8:4.** Stephen was the first Christian to die because of his faith in Jesus, starting the persecution Jesus talked about. Imagine the people running from their hometowns in the middle of this, fearing for their lives and taking only what they can carry. *How could they lose everything and yet 'preach the word wherever they went?'*
7. *How would you respond in this situation? Could you imagine yourself losing your job, your home, everything you own, or even being arrested, and still telling people that Jesus is Good News?*
8. Peter wrote a letter to the people scattered by persecution after the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple. **Read 1 Peter 1:3-7, 1 Peter 2:4-5, and 1 Peter 2:9.** (Keep in mind 'you' is plural in these verses – it's not one person alone, but the church together.) *Which of those words would resonate most strongly for refugees who fled for their lives?*
9. *Which of Peter's encouragements resonate most strongly for you these days?*
10. ***How do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to or act on what we have read and discussed?***

Practices – A Spiritual House, A Holy Priesthood, Offering Sacrifices

In the past, people would go to the Temple to meet with God and offer sacrifices, and the priest was the go-between. The person would talk to the priest, and the priest would talk to God. Sacrifices were given as a way to say 'please' or 'thank you' or 'I'm sorry' to God.

Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple, the scattering of the priests, and the ending of the sacrifices. However, God wasn't simply tearing down the Temple but building something new. In the Church, Jesus laid the foundation for a new Temple, brought in a whole new priesthood, and introduced a new way to do sacrifices.

Take some time to reflect on these three truths. Read each sentence slowly.

1. We are the Temple. God is in our community the same way a person lives in a house.
2. We are Priests. I can talk directly to God, and so can you. You can talk to God for me, and me for you.
3. Our lives are a new kind of Sacrifice. What I do with my life – my actions, attitudes, words, and decisions - is a way to say 'please' or 'thank you' or 'I'm sorry' to God.

Get into smaller groups or partners and take time to pray for each other, allowing the weight of these truths to impact your prayers.

Caring for One Another

- ***Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?***

Using **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.