

“A Good & Better Hope When Our World Begins to Crumble”

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 16th November 2025

Preacher: Pastor Stephen Haar

Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [Luke 21:5-19](#)

So today's message is based on the gospel reading that you heard before. There are two things that I really want to concentrate, a key for the message, and one is about the temple and its big stones, and the other is about troubles that Jesus warned his friends about. But I want to begin a long way from the temple in Jerusalem, let's just pray.

Loving Father, always be near, teach us to love your word that we find our Saviour is here among us, Amen. So 45 years ago I developed an interest in amateur photography. I like to experiment, and those days where they let you experiment, they had sort of a lens and aperture and everything like that in your camera, not as bad as my grandfather who used to have a light meter and he'd stand there looking if the light was right and that might take a couple of minutes and then just as he was about to take the photo, not that anybody moved, but the light changed, so then we'd start the process all over again.

Aren't you glad we've got phones now that do it all for you, are you? No, it takes creativity out of it, out of your own context, and I like the amateur photography using black and white photos because then you could look at depths of field, you could look at where the light was sharp and where it was muted. Whenever we could, I went with a friend and we'd travel the back roads from Gladstone and central Queensland and we were looking for old farm houses and outbuildings. There's something so, I don't know, it still doesn't work that way for me, fascinating about exploring old ruins and wondering what life must have been like then for the people, what dreams and hopes they brought with them as they settled, those men and women, looking for a new life and a future in this country.

And now, of course, as you can see from the photograph, those places are in ruins, except for some native wildflowers that are somehow struggling for survival in the dusty landscape. I imagine another 50 to 100 years, maybe those buildings won't be standing at all. None of that attempt to build something for the future that was safe and enduring.

In a way, that old farmhouse, I think, is a parable about our own lives. All human building in this life has no claim, no claim at all, on permanence. Either the wreckers, the vandals or the passage of time, they will erase everything that we imagined was important.

Much that we spent so much of our energy upon, indeed so much of our worry, those things will cease to be. As some went on about the temple, how it was adorned with magnificent stonework and ornamented with gifts, Jesus said, these things you look up at in days to come, there shall not be one stone left sitting upon another. It shall all be thrown down.

Somehow that was thrown down too, that picture there. But anyway, I was supposed to show you a bit of the wailing wall and everything, all that's left of Herod's temple in the Holy Land. And if you visit the Holy Land, and I have not done that, but I believe you can discover all kinds of ruins from past civilizations, from the Greeks, the Romans, yes, from the Philistines and even ancient Israel.

And as I mentioned, amongst those ruins was all that belongs of King Herod's want to create monuments about his reign and the glory of his country, things that he thought maybe would last forever. And certainly there were visitors, as we hear in the text today, that were mightily impressed about what they saw, these huge stones, and of course, the dome on top of the temple that shone in the sun. Looking at the temple built by Herod the Great, Jesus said that it would all come to nothing.

Now to other people standing there, the onlookers, that sounded impossible. Why? Well, not only was this temple made from massive stones that had been hewn from a quarry, but this was God's temple. Other buildings, yeah, they might fall, but not this one.

God would not allow it. And so these words that Jesus spoke sounded like a massive distrust in God. In the ears of his hearers, it was an insult to God.

So I found this allied. An insult to God. His words sounded like heresy.

So it's not surprising then, those who remember the story of the Passion, what was the charge that was brought against Jesus? He said that, destroy this temple, and three days later, I'll rise it again. And he was charged with blasphemy. And yet within 40 years, the very words that Jesus spoke were fulfilled.

The temple was destroyed, with all the Jewish pride in that place, now left crumbling in the dust. Now we may not like it. In fact, we may deny it and even resist it.

But the reality is that our world is changing. The church is changing. Our lives are changing.

Sometimes change is a welcome. I don't know about passing the peace, but that's another thing. But there are days when change brings loss and fear of loss.

Days when our life was forever changed. The world's different. Nothing's like it used to be.

And I'm sure each of us could tell our own stories of such a day. Stories about the death of a loved one, or about a life-threatening health diagnosis, or an irreconcilable breakdown in a relationship, family business, farm business that go bust, a job that was lost. Stories about the day that you realized the life that now you have faced living is not the life that you really wanted.

Stories of dreams and hopes that never came true. There are days when temples of our life fall, and not just our individual temples. I never think things would happen to this place, this building.

Nothing that we build or maintain has any claim on permanence. We gravely mislead ourselves if we think it does. For many people, the Lutheran Church is not the church that they remember growing up.

It's not like it used to be. Things have changed, and for them, the temple is falling. We live in the so-called lucky country.

When the temple of our economic security and boast about the future, our very social fabric seems to be failing. We can no longer count on our investments growing every year. The job market is unstable, and the housing market almost impossible to enter.

In the news, we hear about wars and natural disasters, nations rising against nations, kingdoms against kingdom, religion against religion. Security, peace, diplomacy, they seem to be giving way to fear and violence and terrorism. Temples falling everywhere.

Each of us have our own temple. Some things have been given to us, others that we have built for ourselves. Our temples can be people that we rely and rest upon, or they can be places or values and beliefs, institutions and dreams of things that we believe structure and order and protect our lives, giving us identity and meaning, providing security and stability.

At least, we think they do, until they fail. In today's gospel, some were speaking about the temple in Jerusalem, beautiful stones, gifts dedicated to God. That's what had structured their community.

It gave identity and meaning, a sense of purpose, of future. It was the centre of Jewish life. Jesus looked at it and said, the days have come when not one stone will be left upon another.

All will be thrown down. So what do we do when our temple falls? Change. You know, as a way of pushing us into the future? Many people begin then by looking for signs about what that future might look like.

What's going to happen now? What do I have to do? How do I get through this? But if we're not careful, in our imagining, we will soon create a future that only exists in our head. This is not the response of Jesus. When Jesus describes things that will happen, he's not asking you to speculate about the future.

Rather, he is providing you signposts that are calling you to be faithful in the present. Sometimes when our temples fall, we look for scapegoats, someone to blame, to perhaps demonise. Maybe some person or some group who does not think or look like or behave like we do.

This is not the response of Jesus. There are many people who just walk away in despair. They can't see anything left.

Everything's lost. The situation seems hopeless. This is not Jesus' response.

Some people become angry, resentful, fighting back. Others will say, this must be God's will. Others may reply, it must be God's punishment.

Many look for answers, quick fixes, maybe something that will help to prop up the old structures and ways of doing things. Again, this is not the response of Jesus. The response of Jesus is exactly the opposite.

Be still. Be quiet. Do not be led astray.

Do not allow your life to be controlled or determined by fear in the things that you see or imagine. Do not listen to the many voices that call you to go this way or that way and follow them. Endure, he says.

Be faithful, trusting, steadfast. Persevere here and now. Jesus is calling us to be present and faithful in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in life.

For if we cannot see or find God here in our present circumstances, even in the face of our temples falling, I doubt very seriously that we will find God anywhere. For you see, the place of fallen temples is the place which God speaks about in his word. In the prophecy of Isaiah, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth.

The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind, but be glad, rejoice forever in what I am now creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight. In that day, God's people will say, surely God is my salvation, my protector. I will trust and I will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might.

He has become my salvation. So Jesus is calling you and me to live lives of endurance and trust, to remain faithful in whatever circumstance we find in life. For in doing so, we will soon discover that God has always been with us.

In the changes, the chances, the chaos of life. Yes, even in the pain, the loss and the disappointment of life, even in that hiddenness, like the days between the cross and the empty tomb, God was there with life. Endurance, trust, perseverance is the ways in which we offer our fallen stones of our temples to Jesus.

For stone by stone, God rebuilds life. Stone by stone, God restores life. Stone by stone, a new temple arises from the deathly rubble.

Stone by stone, we become the temple of God. We no longer have temples, we no longer need temples, we are a temple. As the Apostle Paul writes to people living in Corinth, do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? All of you, together, a temple, a place where the word of God and prayer exists, a place where there is outreach, worship, a place where there is outreach, mission, a place where there is in-reach, the care and the teaching and the nurturing of God's people.

This is a place, through our living, that God's truth for the world is being proclaimed. This house of prayer, this house of the word and teaching, we are a story that needs to be told

along with God's story, for indeed his life lives through us. This now is our opportunity to testify, and what shall we testify? Well, I suppose like the Apostle Paul, we could tell stories about the day that our temple was destroyed, and we looked for life, where true life can be found.

Paul writes, we have this treasure, the knowledge about the glory of God in the face of Jesus, we have this treasure, Paul writes, in the unadorned clay jars of our ordinary lives. Yes, we've been surrounded by troubles, but we are not demoralized. We're not always sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do.

We have been spiritually persecuted, but God has not left our side. We've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What life did to Jesus, life does to us, trial, torture, mockery, and murder.

What Jesus did among them, now he does in us, he lives. Our lives are constant, at risk for the sake of Jesus, which makes the life of Jesus all the more evident in us. Powerful words.

But how often do we believe and live as if our life has come to end when our temple falls? This is the end of our story, maybe. It will be. If we run away, scapegoat, respond with anger, or try in our own hubris and pride to rebuild it after our own making, but there's a greater story.

How we discover that God is next to us when our temples fall, and how stone by stone God rebuilds what we cannot. For goodness sake, you confess that each time that you come to worship, I have sinned. I need forgiveness, the gift of life.

This is an ongoing story about God restoring and recreating life, and God now rejoicing and delighting in his people. This is a story of the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and each one of you belong in that story. For this is the gospel according to you as you live out your faith, as you proclaim it to people that you see.

Why? So that the grace and love and mercy of our God may increase with thanksgiving to God. So friends, by endurance and trust in God's gift in Christ, you gain your soul, the gift of eternal life, real life in Jesus. Thanks be to God.

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