

Luke 21:5-19

Stay With It

It seems a daily occurrence to hear of one more thing that is happening to the country to our south. One of the latest is to hear about the ball room that the President of the United States is building. It is nicknamed Trump's ball room. It will be adorned with gold and marble and the most expensive of materials. In fact, we are told that those kinds of changes are happening in the White House itself. In order for the ball room to be built that East Wing of the White House has been demolished. These stories of a man in a significant position of power doing such things, in some ways, seem to mirror the story told about Harold's Temple in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus.

Now this wasn't really Harold's temple. This was actually the second temple that had been built in Jerusalem and it was there before Harold got into power, but he did make it something spectacular. Harold did a lot of building projects. It was his way of showing his power and dominance. It was also because, well, he was pretty self-absorbed. This was a man who killed his own wife and some children because he was determined to keep his power and even if it were his family that he deemed a threat.

And this temple was spectacular. It is reported that it was pure white and much of it clad with gold. The scripture reading itself says that those walking with Jesus were "remarking how beautiful it was, the splendor of its stonework and memorial gifts."¹ This was a remarkable structure and though the Jewish people were not a fan of Harold and his way of wielding power through violence and submission of the people, they were pretty impressed by their beautiful Temple. Even if Harold was the one who had created the opulence, it was still viewed as the centre of Jewish faith and the place where God resided.

Yet there is Jesus, doing what Jesus does, putting everything into perspective, a God perspective. Jesus walking with those who were admiring the Temple said, "All this you're admiring so much—the time is coming when every stone in that building will end up in a heap of rubble."² Interestingly enough, those with him don't ask how or why, they ask when. One might wonder about that. However, they already understood that God's power was greater than any earthly power. So, they ask "When?".

Think about it, we often pray or ask, when will all this end. People have made a habit over the aeons of trying to predict when the world would end. Not necessary *how* it

¹ [*The Message \(MSG\)*](#). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

² Ibid.

would end, though there are some who would speculate. The question is most often about *when*.

In our thoughts and conversations, in our experience we ask when will the suffering end. When will wars end and peace come? When will health care and education be equally available to all at a cost that everyone can afford? When will those in power pay attention to the needs of those who have no power? When will things on earth be as in heaven?

We do ask other questions, like how these things will come to pass, and what needs to be done in order for it to happen? Yet, most often the question is, when? That may be because it seems that history repeats itself so we know that “Nation will fight nation and ruler fight ruler, over and over. Huge earthquakes will occur in various places. There will be famines. You’ll think at times that the very sky is falling.”³ Persecution continues.

Jesus answer to this is endurance. “Staying with it—that’s what is required. Stay with it to the end. You won’t be sorry; you’ll be saved.”

This is all very mystifying if you consider that when this gospel was written the people had witnessed the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. Which means that Luke is writing about these things years after it happened, years after Jesus’ death and years after the Temple had been destroyed, and yet, Luke choses this story to share with those who at the time were living out their faith, trusting God with their very lives.

Now I will say, I find passages such as this difficult to preach on. When there has been so much suffering in the world I, like so many of us, wonder why God doesn’t just swoop down and fix it. Why do we have to have so much suffering? If there is a God, why are children abused? Why are not the resources of power and wealth used to do more good than harm? Why cancer or heart disease or whatever physical ailment? Why a crisis of drug abuse or even the violence that goes along with the drug trade? Why sex trafficking, mental health crisis, the list could go on and on.

And really that is what Jesus is saying. This has always been the case with humankind. Structures do not last, empires crumble, nothing stays great forever, life is a struggle, however, the one thing that endures is God’s presence and faithfulness through it all. God not once...not once...promised a life without pain and suffering, at least not until heaven and earth are one. God promised and promises to be with us.

Somehow in some way, God is always with us.

And we are called to endure. It doesn’t mean that we don’t fight for a better world. What we are called to is endurance in the midst of strife. This is not endurance for the sake of making it through, it is endurance that stands as a witness to the hope we have in God.

³ Ibid.

Historian and theologian Diana Butler Bass writes, "...Jesus described a robust endurance — persistence, tenacity, wisdom, and strength. He said that God's people would be persecuted and ridiculed. Why? For living with the sure knowledge that what Herod built will fall. Jesus' followers understand that what every egomaniacal power-hungry human has ever built will fall."⁴

However, God's people also understand that God is eternal, love is eternal, hope is eternal. Butler Bass follows up with these words, "The answer to *when* isn't a date assigned on a calendar. Jesus' followers have a different sense of time. Time isn't a deadline. Instead, it is a journey to hope through endurance. Endure in love. Love of God. Love of neighbor. Endure in what is real. Persist. Resist. Be brave and strong."⁵

Time isn't a deadline; it is a journey to hope through endurance. A different sense of time. That is truly profound. We so often think of time as a line from here to there. Our birthdays come year after year and we get one year older, another trip around the sun. There is birth, life, and death. A line from here to there. We see trips in that way; they start on this date and end on that date. They start here and end there. But what if our understanding of time isn't God's understanding of time?

What if this journey of faith is something different? What if faith is not at all about getting through life, but rather living life, with respect, wisdom, hope, grace, and love, along with a healthy respect for God? What if faith is about getting to know God's provision in our time now through the power of the Holy Spirit living and working in and through us?

This changes the way we look at life. Do we still wish that suffering would end? Of course! But when we look at life as a wandering journey of deepening faith, hope, and love, rather than a destination, then I wonder if we get closer to what is intended for our lives.

Maybe in the days to come we can continue to work for a world that is free from tyranny, illness, and injustice, all the while living into the hope that we find in Jesus who came to us as God in flesh and blood, as a person. God who did not keep himself separate from our suffering, but endured even to the point of death on a cross. God who loved the world so much that becoming one of us was the way to reconcile us into God's grace. God did not sacrifice us, God sacrificed Godself and this out of love.

May the knowledge of God's love for you, the hope we have in Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit help you to stay with it. To stay with it with a robust endurance. And stick to it attitude of persistence, tenacity, wisdom, and strength.

All this we ask through the one who created us, loves us, and is with us. Amen.

⁴ Butler Bass, Diana. [Sunday Musings](#) When, when, when? Accessed November 16, 2025.

⁵ Ibid.