

PENTECOST 26
DANIEL 12:1-3
HEBREWS 10:11-25
MARK 13:1-8
NOVEMBER 17, 18, 2018

YEAR B

Appearances are important in many parts of our lives. Some of us fuss over the clothes we wear. We want to be in style and up with the times. Others worry less about their clothes and more about hairstyles. Some of us work hard to make our homes and our yards look good. We spend money to make sure everything is looking good. It is important for us to pay attention to the things that need to be done in all parts of our lives. If we wear clothes that are out of date or not clean and if our hair is not clean or not attractive we might eventually not feel good about ourselves. If we do not spend the money to keep our homes in good repair they will begin to deteriorate and lose value. If the yard is not cared for weeds will eventually take over and its appearance will fail. Why all of this focus and fuss over appearances? Why worry about what others think when it comes to personal tastes and choices? We pay attention because looks are important but there other things also important. Jesus had some comments about the way things look. In this reading from Mark 13 Jesus gives us a teaching on what is more important than outward appearances.

Mark 13:1, 2 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

As we read these verses today we are come to the end of Jesus’ teachings. As we put these words into the greater context of Mark we see that Jesus has already entered Jerusalem on a donkey and people were excited to see him. Jesus went to the temple in order to cleanse it from the moneychangers and merchants. He said those painful words about the temple being a house of prayer and not a place of corruption and business. As we read today we see that Jesus and his disciples have been in this house of prayer and worship and were leaving. As they left the disciples marveled over the splendor of this majestic looking building. They were in awe of its architecture and the enormous stones used in building the temple. This was the third temple in Jerusalem. The first was Solomon’s temple, which was destroyed by

the Babylonians in 587 BC. The second was build a hundred years later under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. The temple where Jesus and his disciples were was Herod's temple. We might say this was Herod's remodel of the Temple and was not yet complete.

These words from the Lord would have a confusing. The temple was the most holy place on earth. It was the place people went to offer the sacrifices and to have their sins forgiven. For Jesus to say this would be torn down was to say that the worst possible thing would happen. The Jewish people loved the temple. Most Jews wanted to go there at least once before they died. The temple was a gift from God for the people and it was to be a house of prayer for all nations. The temple Jesus and his disciples left that day was hardly a welcoming place for all people. If you were a Jewish woman you could go only so far. Only Jewish men could go into the innermost part of the temple. Even the average man could not go into the holy of holies. Gentiles were not permitted beyond their own space. It had become a place of division instead of a place where all of God's people could gather to worship and pray. It was not a welcoming place but had become a place were some were not welcome.

The Lord has given you and me this building to use for worship. God gives us this space and it is first and foremost a house of prayer, worship and proclamation for all people. The Lord gives it and God wants us to take care of it. This means we do proper maintenance and we make sure it is clean and presentable to those that come here because they are meeting the Lord here. We give our best to the Lord. We seek to have as few distrtactions as possible when we are worshipping the Lord in this place. There is something much more important than this building though. Jesus and his disciples were leaving the temple that day. The disciples were marveling but Jesus was not as impressed as they were.

“Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

40 years after Jesus spoke these words the temple in Jerusalem was burned to the

ground so that not one stone remained upon another? It has been 20 centuries and the temple still has not been rebuilt. All that is left is the Western Wall sometimes called that Wailing Wall. The Romans burned it down and tore it down but the true reason is that the Jews insisted on walking in their own ways instead of God's ways. The Lord is not impressed with all of the Pomp and Circumstance when it is not done in humility and obedience to the will of God. The Lord is not impressed with our ritual when it is done at the expense of true worship. Jesus wept over the people in that city. He stood on the hill overlooking Jerusalem and wept because they were not getting it. They were not receiving the life Jesus came to give. In Matthew's gospel we are told that Jesus wept for the people. He told about how he would have gathered that city to himself as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Because they would not receive him they could also not have the life he gives. They could not continue to have this place worship because they were misusing the house of the Lord their God.

Mark 13:4-6 "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.

The Lord has given us this place of worship. What are we doing here? Are we worshipping the building or are we worshipping the Lord? Do we look at this building and its furnishings and marvel or do you marvel at the word of the Lord that you hear while you are here. I am not talking about marveling over the words of a preacher but the word of the Lord. When we are in this place of worship we hear the truth proclaimed but how do you know it is the truth? How do you know when someone is leading you astray? How do you know the voice of Jesus when he calls and know the difference when the imposters call? This is a question many are confused about but we do not need to be confused. Confusion is not of God but of Satan. Those that come to lead you astray are coming from Satan and want you to follow the wrong person. When the Lord calls you will know him because you belong to his flock. Jesus says, "I know my own and my own know me. They will know my voice because they belong to me." We know the truth because we know the Bible. We have read the word of God and so we know that Jesus is Lord and God is Father

and the Holy Spirit has come to reveal the Father and Son to us.

Jesus is the one we listen to and he is the one we know as Lord and Savior. It is important that we care for this building the Lord has given. We must not allow the building to divide us so that we cannot worship here. We must use this building for the purposes the Lord intended. This is not a place of business except that we do the Lord's business here. It is not a place where we intend to get rich at the expense of others but it is a place people are cared for and God's children are nurtured. It is a place where we gather at the Lord's Table in order to be touched by the hand of God and united as one body with all others that partake of this meal.

If these walls would fall down tomorrow the church would continue to be the church and we would continue to serve the Lord. If our building suddenly was destroyed by fire or strong wind we would still be the church of Jesus Christ and we would still do the work God calls us to. If all we are is a building then we are a vulnerable people waiting to fail but when Jesus is our Lord we will not fail but we will serve the Lord in many ways.

The Lord continues to bless us with this building. We thank God for the men and that join in this work. Allow the word of God to be proclaimed here and the Lord's blessings to be celebrated. Give thanks to God that the work of God to be done.
AMEN