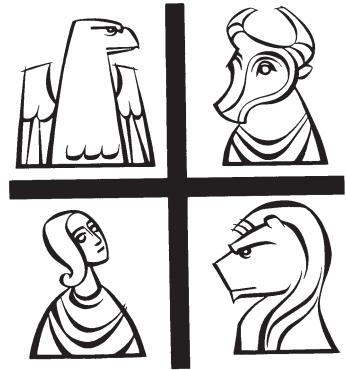


Reading Luke in Lent



Gospel of Luke 21:1 - 38

The Widow's Offering

1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts
into the offering box,
2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.
3 And he said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.
4 For they all contributed out of their abundance,
but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'

Jesus Foretells Destruction of the Temple

5 And while some were speaking of the temple,
how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said,
6 'As for these things that you see,
the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another
that will not be thrown down.'
7 And they asked him,
'Teacher, when will these things be,
and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?'
8 And he said, 'See that you are not led astray.
For many will come in my name, saying, "I am he!"
and, "The time is at hand!"
Do not go after them.
9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified,
for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.'

Jesus Foretells Wars and Persecution

10 Then he said to them,
'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences.
And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.
12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you,
delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons,
and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.
13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness.
14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer,
15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom,
which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.
16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends,
and some of you they will put to death.
17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake.
18 But not a hair of your head will perish.
19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Jesus Foretells Destruction of Jerusalem

20 'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,
then know that its desolation has come near.
21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,
and let those who are inside the city depart,
and let not those who are out in the country enter it,
22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written.
23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!
For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people.
24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations,
and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles,
until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The Coming of the Son of Man

25 'And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars,
and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity
because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,
26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.
For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near.'

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

29 And he told them a parable:
'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.
30 As soon as they come out in leaf,
you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near.
31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.
32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.
33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Watch Yourselfs

34 'But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down
with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life,
and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.
35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.
36 But stay awake at all times,
praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place,
and to stand before the Son of Man.'

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple,
but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet.
38 And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Reflection

Jesus tells the people that the temple will be destroyed, there will be persecutions, Jerusalem will be laid to waste and the Son of Man will come in glory. Jesus' followers need to read the signs of the time and be ready.

In his lifetime Luke had seen the signs of the times. The Romans destroyed the temple in 70ad, e.g. after 40 years, a generation. In the Acts of the Apostles he describes the persecution of the followers of Jesus. How they will be handed over to the authorities, be hated and put to death, but that it will also be an opportunity to give witness. When Stephen is stoned he will have a vision of the Son of Man (Acts 7:55).

At the end of this section after another day's teaching Jesus retires to the Mount of Olives. He will do the same after the Last Supper.

- To the first hearers of Luke's Gospel this passage would have been a mixture of frightening prophecy and consolation. Yes, the world was a dangerous place but they could place their faith in Jesus who promised that their endurance will gain them their lives.
 - What have the enduring aspects of your faith?

Prayer

Lord God of all the ages,
the One who is, who was, and who is to come,
stir up within us a longing for your kingdom,
steady our hearts in time of trial,
and grant us patient endurance
until the sun of justice dawns.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.
Amen.

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