A close up of a sign

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**November 17, 2019 – Wisdom’s Children**

**Given by Rev. Mattei**

Countless books, movies, and television shows speculate on what the end of the world may be like. Why the fascination? Are world-ending movies a way to prepare ourselves for what’s to come or just playing out our greatest fears to somehow diminish the power they hold over us? Unfortunately, all we see happening in the world today is nothing new; wars, revolutions, earthquakes, plagues, and famine have existed as long as there is human memory. But so what? Should we ignore the signs of the impending apocalypse just because we got accustomed to them? That wasn’t Jesus’ reason for bringing them up. Jesus’ reply to the disciples’ question about “when” the end will come was not intended to corroborate a fatalistic end date and the beginning of the new age. Jesus’ answer was meant to help people focus on “how” to live their lives now, moving away from a future-oriented perspective, leaden with anxiety, to a present-day perspective, filled with values and principles, vision, joy, and hope. Jesus’ vision is a *bodily*-lived faith in the present moment.

Our call is to remain rooted in the Word and available to the Spirit of Jesus. When under duress and experiencing a family crisis, what values and principles do we fall back on? If we are firmly based on our Christian values, we are empowered to spread love in the world as we find tragedy, we offer the support and hope others need. We are not in control and we cannot fix or prevent bad things. Yet, it is enough to know that God is with us and that we will endure.

Jesus’ response to the disciples in today’s gospel is part of his Temple teaching, during which he received a series of challenging questions regarding his authority (Lk. 20:1-19), his patriotism (Lk. 20:20-26), his theology (Lk. 20:27-44), and his spirituality (Lk. 20:45-21:38). It’s in light of life’s conflicts that Jesus gave us his thoughts about the proper attitude of a devout disciple.

This section is less about the Temple’s destruction and more about how Jesus’ followers should react to persecution. They should be ready to seize on all challenging opportunities to “witness” (v. 13) without sweating it in advance (v. 14); they should depend on Jesus’ “wisdom” and the eloquence of their spiritual conviction (v. 15). Lady Wisdom ([Prov. 1:20-33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+1%3A20-33&version=NRSV); [Prov. 9:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+9%3A10&version=NrsV)) takes on human form when people remain connected to God’s Spirit ([Lk. 7:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+7%3A35&version=NrsV); [Lk. 11:37-54](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+11%3A37-54&version=NIV)).

Jesus expresses concern about the safety of his followers during the (predicted) time of hatred and persecution. It must not have been easy to hear that their religious commitment to Jesus might require the breakup of families and isolation from their social network during the time of persecution (v. 16-17). In the communal society of the first century, the loss of one’s family would be central to one’s identity. His message, however, is one of hope: “not a hair of your head will perish” (v. 18). Jesus’ apocalyptic language, so common in the ancient world, was appealing to those on the margins of society. Those whose lives were disrupted by the Empire’s mechanisms desired a language and ideas that suggested that the Empire might not last forever. Endurance was required, though (v. 19).

And so, how can we also be wisdom’s children? Through family, friends, and neighbors, we have been given the blessing of a call into a Christian heritage and community. We live by values and stand on principles that announce who we are and tell the story of what we are about. Nativity is a church for others whomever the others may be. It’s a church open to the mystery of God, ready to trust God’s promises, and faithful to the call to bring healing and hope. When we look at our values statement and the vision we have for the world, we know who we are and whose we are. We want to invite others into this community vision. We want to preserve it, support it, help it grow, and evolve.

Let us renew our commitment to life together. Let us renew our promises to God and bring our offerings to the altar. Amen.