



# Sunday Reflection

## Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 14 November 2021

# Pentecost 25

*In worshipping together, we seek to grow as a community that encourages, challenges and equips one another to proclaim our trust in Jesus Christ. We are called to achieve this through engaging, compassionately and sacrificially, with our neighbourhoods and all creation.*

## Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

**"Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'" Mark 13:2**

### **An Illustration to set the scene**

Cataclysmic events often provoke speculation about the end times, yet profound questions about judgement and trust can also arise in more humble situations.

Exams – tests - are a key life moment for many of us, placing our behaviour, attitudes, relationships and choices in the spotlight.

The results, however, are determined by examiners we will probably never meet.

There is much we need to be sure about: *are our teachers leading us through the syllabus correctly? Do we stick to the course core texts or read around the subject? If we conduct extra research, how do we ascertain whether our source materials are trustworthy? Should we follow a set plan for revision or listen to our gut instincts about what works best for us?*

Answers to these questions will have a bearing on our exam, or test, performance, while the results may have far-reaching consequences for our future.

However, the final say as to how well we have done comes down to the examiners.

We have to trust that they will honour the rules in spirit as well as in letter – treating each candidate equally and fairly.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Chapter thirteen of Mark's Gospel occurs during Holy Week, before the events of the Last Supper.

After triumphally entering Jerusalem, Jesus goes to see the Temple.

Returning the following day, he drives out the money-changers, symbolically reaffirming the building's purpose as a house of prayer rather than commerce.

On his next visit he sits opposite the treasury gift boxes, critiquing their use. As we recalled last week.

A disciple's throwaway remark concerning the grandeur of the Temple provokes an extended apocalyptic discourse about the end of its relevance: "**Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down,**" says Jesus.

Next, the scene shifts to the Mount of Olives, and we are told that Jesus is sitting "opposite the Temple" as his disciples ask when this will happen and what the signs will be.

Once again, the implications are clear: Jesus' presence, especially his involvement in the events unfolding later that week – the once-and-for-all-time sacrifice of his life – supersedes the function of the Temple.

The chapter continues mixing oracles of end-time disruption, destruction and judgement with warnings against following false messiahs.

In verses five to seven Jesus warns the disciples to be on their guard regarding imposters who declare that "*I am he!*"

The term "I am" is associated with God as Yahweh, and the fact that Jesus uses it about himself, both here and elsewhere, implies both that these fake leaders will have considerable arrogance and that they will be very plausible, hard to ignore or avoid.

Jesus continues, reminding his disciples that during times of upheaval many charismatic prophets are bound to appear offering easy answers.

However, the very fact that they have upped the ante, and declared catastrophic events to be the apocalypse, is proof of their errancy.

War, famine and natural disasters are not the end of the world; rather, they are, like birthing pains, integral aspects of an ongoing, long-term process.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

The remaining large blocks of stone that constitute the lower segments of the *Wailing Wall* in Jerusalem are reminders that, no matter the size of an institution, if it is not fit for God's purpose it will fall.

It is vital for the health of the Church that it bears this warning in mind.

Leadership, theologies, missional developments, all must constantly be scrutinised to ascertain that they conform to Christ's Gospel pattern and are not the creations of false prophets – that is why AGMs are important as we reflect on the year past and look to the year ahead.

There are various ways to achieve this, but the Anglican approach is through closely and carefully testing how any claim stands up to interrogation by scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

While this process is neither infallible nor swift, it nevertheless allows for considered reflection.

***Reflective practice*** (which is a skill set Lisa our curate has been trained in for her future ministry) is increasingly given short shrift in a culture driven by emotive headlines and volatile instant reactions.

Christian communities are called to be countercultural in this respect, to offer space for reflection, for careful unpacking and multifaceted examination of complex, often distressing, subjects alongside compassionate, non-judgemental engagement that is both practical and sacrificial.

When churches are prepared to test, explore, make and forgive mistakes together, they develop the insight and strength to reject the vapid claims of false messiahs and to hold fast to Christ's Gospel.

**"Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'" *Mark 13:2***

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**