

111724 Sermon "Because He Lives" Mark 13:1-8

As Jesus and His disciples left the temple, one of them marveled at its splendor: "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!". The temple, to the Jewish people, symbolized strength, permanence, and God's presence. But Jesus' reply was startling, "Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

In Mark 13:1-8, Jesus prepares His disciples for troubling times ahead. He describes the destruction of the temple, wars, earthquakes, and famines, but emphasizes that these are not the end. This passage challenges us to examine how we respond in times of fear, uncertainty, and weakness. Do we lean into God's promises, or do we depend on ourselves?

First of all, the disciples' awe at the temple in Jerusalem reflects their deep admiration for this architectural and cultural masterpiece. The disciples' amazement was well-founded. The temple was not just a religious center; it symbolized Jewish identity and pride. Today, in America, where we live, there are many churches in every town, but at that time, in Israel, there was only one temple.

Originally rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra after the Babylonian exile, the temple underwent a dramatic renovation under Herod the Great, who began a massive remodeling project in 19 B.C. The compound was nearly 500 yards long and 400 yards wide, a marvel of ancient engineering. The Jewish historian Josephus described its exterior as covered in gold, so brilliant it could blind onlookers when the sun hit it. White marble blocks added to its grandeur, giving the impression of snow from afar.

For over a thousand years, the temple had been the heart of Jewish life, central to worship, national identity, and even personal oaths. Speaking against it was considered blasphemy. Despite its splendor, Jesus predicted the temple's destruction, a prophecy fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans razed it to the ground. Jesus' words were a stark reminder that even the most magnificent human achievements are temporary. The temple, though breathtaking, was a physical structure that could not replace the eternal kingdom of God.

Actually, for many Jews, the temple had become more than a place of worship, it became an idol, representing their pride and identity more than their devotion to God. Sometimes, even good things can overshadow the place of God in our lives, turning blessings into idols. The temple's destruction is a call to examine what we value most. Are there things in our lives—our accomplishments, possessions, or traditions—that rival God in importance? The temple, despite its beauty, was not eternal. Jesus invites us to invest in what truly lasts: our relationship with Him and His eternal kingdom.

In John 4:23, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him," meaning that true worship is not limited to a specific place, but rather requires a sincere heart and understanding of God's Word. The Apostle Paul says to the Christians in Corinth: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Secondly, how we respond to weakness determines who we are becoming. Our fears, failures, and uncertainties test our faith and shape our spiritual character. For example, Moses was called to lead despite his fear of

speaking, Moses depended on God's strength to fulfill his mission. Mary was a young, humble woman chosen to bear the Savior, Mary responded with trust, saying, "I am the Lord's servant."

God's criteria for calling someone is never about their qualifications but about how they respond when they reach the end of themselves. Probably you have heard this: God does not call the equipped but equip the called. So, the question we need to ask ourselves is, will we depend increasingly on God or on our own strength?

In this passage, Jesus reminds His disciples to stay spiritually awake. This vigilance doesn't mean living in fear but actively trusting God in every circumstance. Instead of letting fear paralyze you, take it to God in prayer, who promises peace beyond understanding. And trust that God is working all things together for good, even when the path ahead is unclear.

Consistency in spiritual wakefulness doesn't come naturally; it requires effort, discipline, and frequent reminders. Like athletes train their bodies, we must train our spirits to remain alert. You can create a habit of checking in with God to assess your spiritual state. Let God's word challenge and guide you daily. Surround yourself with believers who encourage you to stay spiritually focused.

The apostle Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that when we rely on God, God's power is made perfect in our weakness. The Apostle Paul prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed, yet God's response was not to take away the thorn but to provide grace. "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." Paul's weakness became a platform

for God's strength, transforming him into a model of dependence on God's power.

Mark 13:1-8 challenges us to place our trust in God alone. Temple may fall, false messiahs may arise, and calamities may come, but God's promises endure. How we respond to life's challenges defines us. We can choose to let weakness drive us to God, allowing God to transform our pain into purpose. This is the hope we have in Christ: that because He lives, we can face tomorrow with courage and faith.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, in times of fear, insecurity, or uncertainty, remember that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. Turn to Jesus, and He will guide you through every sorrow, birthing new hope and purpose in your life. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.