

If someone was driving past our church last month, they'd might have said, "Wow, this place is a mess! Who would want to be part of this church?"

As you're aware, we had our construction project with our foundation. As we read our Gospel text for today, we look at the world Jesus describes, and we say to ourselves, "That place looks like a mess! Who would want to live there? Who would want to be part of the church when there's persecution like that? Who would want to deal with any of this? Who would want to live in the end times?"

I wouldn't blame them. I could understand this hesitancy. I could understand the shock and the fear as we read a text like this. Wars and rumors of wars. Famines. Nation rising against nation. Brother betraying brother over to death. Earthquakes. Being taken before kings and synagogues. Who would want that? Certainly not me. Do you?

It's all a lot. It's enough to make you feel discouraged. It's enough to make you think, "What are you doing with this end of the world, business, Jesus? Did you forget? Are you asleep at the wheel? Why all this doom and gloom, especially as we approach your second coming? Couldn't there be another way?"

Even looking around at our lives and around at our world, we see wars with Israel still fighting in the Middle East and Ukraine still fighting Russia. Those wars seem like they have no end in sight.

We look at things like the way that our lives are going. It's not as fashionable to be a Christian as it once was. It can sometimes feel as though we have a second head when we tell others we are Christians. Maybe none of us have been taken before kings, but there have been Christians taken before judges to explain their faith in court. Churches fight among themselves on important issues. Things like abortion, gay marriage, transgenderism.

We look at the election results and there may be some people who say wow, this is the end of the world. There are others who look at the election results and think that only now will things finally be made right with the new president in charge. We live in tumultuous times. We live in times when we don't know what's going to happen. We live in the end times even now.

As we reflect on this text, we understand that we are in the last weeks of the church year. We are focusing on the end of the world in these last weeks. It should come as no surprise that we have these shocking texts from Jesus speaking of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the talk of persecution, and the whole nine yards.

I know you've had this conversation, maybe it was with another member, maybe it was with a friend, maybe it was talking to someone walking through the neighborhood. You have the chance to explain to this person, "Well, we are doing a project to waterproof our foundation. We are paying professionals to put a waterproof coating up and down the entire foundation, then put Styrofoam over it, and then put up flashing to keep the water away from that, then pouring new concrete pads outside the sanctuary to make sure the water runs away from our foundation. It looks awful, but it will look amazing in a few weeks. We're doing all this work so the foundation can be strong to let people gather here to learn about Jesus for generations to come." With that simple explanation, all suspicion goes away.

Consider Christianity, the fixes we want to implement are not surface level. It's not simply a matter of just getting the right person in the White House. It's not a matter of everyone just simply having clean water then they'll stop being angry. It's not a matter of everyone just getting a college degree. Those things and more will not fix the problem. We know the problem cuts to the heart. It has to do with our sin condition. Because of sin, we live in a world where there is death, destruction, and suffering many times caused by sinful humans.

Jesus is working to make all things new. Making all things new isn't just about putting a bandaid on it, it's about taking the excavator and digging down to the base of the foundation. It's not a quick fix.

Our congregation wants water to stay away from the foundation, but the Church doesn't want water to stay away from you. In baptism you have been washed, you have been made new, you have been given a new heart. Think about the children that we have had the privilege to welcome to the congregation through the waters of baptism in the previous years. In a similar fashion, each one of us has been baptized into the faith. Through Baptism Jesus makes us new.

We look at the horrific things that take place in this text. These are also things that happened to Jesus. Nations arose against nation as the Jews manipulated the Romans to get them to execute Jesus. Brother betrayed brother as Jesus' own family thought He was crazy. The disciples were brought before kings and governors as even Peter didn't want to confess his faith in Jesus as he disowned Jesus three times. The earth quaked as Jesus died. Yet the earth quaked again as the stone rolled back from the tomb. Jesus through His death and resurrection is making all things new. He starts at the foundation. He starts at the root.

So it is the mission of the Church to make all things new, so it comes as no surprise that these same persecutions were faced in the early church. The city of Jerusalem experienced a famine about which we read in the book of Acts. War came upon Jerusalem as the Romans invaded and destroyed the temple. Disagreements about who Jesus was caused all sorts of suffering and conflict among Jewish converts who left their lifestyles to follow Jesus.

The things that Jesus prophesies in this text have been happening throughout history and will culminate in the day He comes back. These things are not simply the Father sending His Church and His world to hell in a handbasket. What we see in these end times is part of the healing process. It is part of the restoration of the foundation that started when Jesus died and rose again, continues as He ascended, and will be finalized as he returns again in glory and will judge both the living and the dead.

Christ's second coming is not a reason to be afraid, but it is a time of hope and peace as we are excited to have all things set to rights and we're excited to see Jesus face to face. We have two promises in our text. First, that Jesus will give you the words to say. **“And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”** Jesus will give you the words to say in those moments. You don't need to worry!

As we consider the foundation project, I don't think this happened. You could imagine a scenario where a long lost member comes back to church the first time during this construction project. He looks at the

construction equipment, looks at the mess, and says, “This isn’t the church I got married in. This isn’t the church I know and love! I don’t like this mess! I’m leaving this church. I don’t want any part in this church.”

Of course, we would say this would be short-sighted. We know the finished product will be amazing and will help our church preach the Gospel for generations to come.

But what does really happen is that Christians do leave the Church, not just a congregation, but the Christian church altogether as they see the persecutions that threaten the Church, as they see war, rumors of war. They see the mess and they leave. That’s what Satan wants us to do. Satan wants us to see these things and be discouraged and abandon the faith, but Jesus gives us this promise: “**And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**” What an amazing promise that is! Jesus also said: “**Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**”” Dear Christian friend, end of the world is not a bad thing. It’s the start of Jesus’ making all things right which will be finalized at His Second Coming. The world which we see will be better than anything we could have imagined: no more death, no more sin, no more Satan, no more suffering—all because Christ has done all things well and makes all things new. We will see loved ones again. We will see the church restored in perfect splendor as it should be. Don’t leave, don’t be discouraged. Stick around, the best is yet to come. Amen!