

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -23rd Sunday After Pentecost - November 16, 2025

Welcome to worship. As a church year begins to draw to a close, next week will be the last Sunday after Pentecost leading us into Advent.

Which begs the question among church people, how many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb? Change? No, no, no, no, no.

You see, we don't like impermanence and maybe that's why we don't like change because oftentimes change suggests loss.

But as I know you, your savvy people, you know this already, you've experienced it, been there, done that.

So the question then becomes not a silly joke, but instead a question to be lived and that is with all the impermanence, with all of the upheaval.

How do we as a faith community endure and how do we as individuals endure?

I think as we pray and sing together today and hear scripture together, it is my hope and prayer that the Spirit speaks to us and maybe suggests ways in which we can endure.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 21st chapter.

While some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said,

"As for all these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left on another, all will be thrown down."

And they asked him, "Teacher, when will all this be and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?"

And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he, the time is near.'

Do not go after them."

When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.

Then Jesus said to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues,

and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you and they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons,

and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name."

This will give you an opportunity to testify.

So, make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to understand or contradict.

You will be betrayed even by parents and siblings, by relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.

You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair of your head will perish.

By your endurance, you will gain your souls.

The Gospel of our Lord.

The Sermon]

Won't you be seated?

[inaudible]

Grace to you in peace.

From God who was, who is, and who is to come.

[inaudible]

So the line from a Joni Mitchell song, "Yellow Taxi," comes to mind.

Some of you are smiling because you could probably even sing the little la la la

part that comes after the paved paradise and they put up a parking lot.

There's a little grief in that, isn't there?

The things aren't what they used to be.

And someone got the bright idea to just pave it over, or bulldoze it in some cases.

But the weird thing about parking lots, and I don't know a lot about them, I'm not on the property committee,

but here's something that I've noticed wherever there's pavement,

the things that we call weeds,

managed to grow between those little fracture lines, and sometimes they even break through some of the pavement.

I like to think that's a bit of a living parable

about the inexorable stubbornness of creation itself to keep on, keep on on.

Against the odds, or maybe even against some of our not always better intentions.

But what about temples that are flattened to rubble?

What then?

The temple that Jesus would have admired and spoken of had been dedicated some 200 years before he was even born.

This was the second temple.

And some of you will probably think, "Why is he bartsplaining this to us?"

We live this reality, but here we go.

The festival of the dedication of that second temple, Hanukkah.

That's significant for a lot of reasons.

And I think for all of us, it's significant.

By the time Luke's Gospel was written, there's pretty good evidence that the

temple had already been destroyed.

The arrests were happening, the wars were happening, all of this chaos was happening.

And yet, there were communities of people who would gather, they would light a candle, and they would feast together.

And they would remember God bringing light and love into the world, even with the temple being flattened and sacked.

Maybe that kind of love is the same sort of persistent and exorable pushing forward, as evidenced in those little wild flowers and weeds that find their way in the nooks and crannies of pavement.

It's somewhat miraculous, I think, that communities of people through holocaust and through all kinds of unspeakable diaspora and displacement still gather.

And they still sing, and they feast, and they light candles.

Lest you get on the power of positive thinking circuit, please, let's disabuse ourselves of that now.

There's a Celtic tradition, actually, when people get together for a feast, especially after they've lost someone, they set a place setting for them.

It's a way of remembering, it's a way of being reminded of who that person was, and being honest about the loss.

And yet, somehow, somehow, people still gather and eat together, even knowing that there is that empty place at the table.

This text maybe makes sense when you think about the time of year. I don't know if it was planned that way or just worked out.

But if you think about All Saints Day, All Souls Day, the day of the dead celebrated among many Latin American and South American countries, and in Spain,

all times to remember both loss and the permanence of love, and Remembrance Day, another example of giving grief at its due, as Shakespeare would say,

"Letting it have its voice." And even by marking the loss, there's something else.

The Bishop of the Manitoba Northwest, Ontario Synod, likes to say that, especially

as the pandemic hit, "The Church has forgotten how to lament."

His words were prescient, because there is a small hymnal that's come out, and somewhere in the introductory comments are the words about additional Psalms of lament

and giving grief its voice. Because if we try to pave over all of that, it's going to squirt out some other way anyhow.

So it needs to be dealt with, lived through, and not as the false prophets might have us to ignore it for positivity.

False prophets are those who supposedly speak for another, and I think there's a pattern, if I read my first Testament Scripture properly,

that many of the false prophets were ones who did one of two things. They either introduced a quick fix, like, "Oh, a military alliance with them.

Problem solved. Tickety boo. Bob's your uncle. Let's move on." Or, "We will make time stand still, or we will turn back the clock."

And then everything will be fine. We won't be in the fix that we're in.

It's as if life is like a garden tractor. Isn't that sad? But a garden tractor that the reverse gear no longer exists.

You might have to operate in low, in first, and maybe when we're energetic in high gear. But we don't get the luxury of reverse.

And we don't get the luxury of the quick fix.

That puts us smack and square up against that question.

What happens in the face of impermanence when we're asked to endure and we just can't? We've hit the wall.

We wouldn't be the first. The prophetized if. You might remember these words. I know these are a favorite of a couple of folk here.

There's a time at which even the strength among the young and the swift fails.

But they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and they shall mount up as eagles.

They shall walk and not be weary and they shall run and not faint.

Again, this isn't a positivity sermon about, "Come on folks, ratchet it up, draw on your inner reserves.

I'll leave that for a new rock, need to give speeches like that wherever he's giving those speeches now."

But instead, we honestly and honest to goodnessly give voice to where we are right now.

And we depend on the God of promise, the God of temple dedications, the God who spoke creation into chaos,

and the God who spoke life into death because that's where we find ourselves to listen for that voice of God,

the one that calls us by name.

My theologian friend Anna talks about three kinds of home.

Some of us don't feel like we belong anywhere and some among us, like the person I saw sleeping at the bus stop this morning,

that's literally physically true.

No house, no home, no shelter, except for maybe something temporary,

and maybe not a community of people to be with and to draw support from.

That would be homeless.

To be home sick is to have lost your home or your sense of home anyway.

I was surprised to read that the word "nostalgia," its meaning besides it ain't what it always used to be,

was actually a medical diagnosis.

Those of you in medical fields, you probably recognize the last part of that word "algia,"

as a malady, as an ache, as a pain.

Among combat personnel in the First World War,

it was discovered that there were some whose souls were broken because the life that they knew had been taken,

that the home that they thought they had maybe had been bombed,

that the life that they thought they had had been irrevocably and irretrievably changed because they had been sent to the breach of war.

And so they were literally sick for a home that is no more.

And finally, there is home.

It might be the homes that we find in the embrace of family or that sense of belonging or that being part of community.

And ultimately, I think home is where God knows our name and does count the numbers of hairs on our head,

and that God does keep close watch over our very soul.

And meanwhile, we tired and beleaguered people.

We are called and empowered by the Spirit of God for the job of walking each other home.

Amen.