

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 16 November 2025 - The Second Sunday before Advent / Safeguarding Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Malachi 4.1–2a; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3.6–13; Luke 21.5–19

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Dr Mel Eyeons, LLM, St Bene't's, Cambridge

If you came to church today hoping for a scary, apocalyptic reading, you're in luck.

We've got the destruction of the centre and heart of Jewish life – the Temple in Jerusalem, the place of God's dwelling with his people and the focus of worship and the sacrificial system.

We've got wars and uprisings.

We've got natural disasters and terrible diseases.

We've got betrayal by those closest to us.

And all of this comes after a promise of persecution.

However, we all have enough stress going on without worrying about the end of the world.

So, despite appearances, this sermon is going to be an exercise in not feeding our fears.

Our Gospel reading opens with Jesus in Jerusalem. It's Holy Week. He will very soon go to his death. Meanwhile, he's in the Temple and people are talking about how beautiful it is.

But Jesus changes the mood by announcing that this place will soon be destroyed. This wasn't a first. The Temple had been destroyed before, by the Babylonians, over 800 years earlier. It was then rebuilt a few hundred years after that, before finally being added to by Herod the Great – the king who the wise men visited at the time of Jesus's birth. And the place did indeed fall, not long after Jesus's earthly life, in 70 AD, destroyed by the Romans during a Jewish rebellion against the Empire and never rebuilt.

However, until that future point the Temple stood at the centre of Jewish life and faith, so understandably people had questions when Jesus announced it wouldn't last long.

"When will this be", they asked "and how will we know it's coming?"

If you've ever read or watched a mystery story or one of those tales set after some kind of apocalypse, you'll know the feeling.

We want to know things like, what's going on? How will it be resolved? Will the villains be stopped and will the good guys triumph? Is everything going to turn out OK?

Now imagine that the story ends abruptly without a resolution. Maybe the last chapter is missing, or the series gets cancelled partway through.

Leaving things unfinished is frustrating.

Yet, Jesus doesn't answer any of the very reasonable questions put to him. He doesn't end the story with a nice conclusion with dates and times.

Instead, he shifts the focus.

First, he encourages his followers to stand firm and not be led astray by people claiming to have all the answers.

History is full of people claiming to have special knowledge about when the world will end, who will be saved, and what everyone should do to prepare. This has happened as recently as this year, as you may remember, with claims that the world would end in September. Yet, as always, the stated date came and went, and the world remains because, as Jesus himself says in Matthew 24.36, only the Father knows "the day and the hour".

Therefore, those who claim special knowledge about the end of the world are to be treated with caution and not followed blindly. Our role is not to run after them, anxiously wondering if they're right, but to remain focused on Jesus, and on living our lives in the faith and love he's taught us.

We are not to feed our fears with stories about the end of the world but instead we are encouraged to remain steadfast in trust and faith, doing our part to work for God's kingdom, and looking to the One who holds all things in his hand.

Jesus then tells his disciples that he knows terrible things will happen in the world. Human nature being what it is, thoughts most often turn to worrying about what might happen when given news like that. But again, Jesus shifts the focus.

The world often seems to be in turmoil, and full of people caught up in fear, hatred, anger, terror, anxiety and anticipation.

Jesus doesn't deny any of this, but he does encourage us to not give way to fear, and to not go down the path of letting our emotions overwhelm us.

We are encouraged to remain dogged and level-headed, focusing on him and on living out our lives of love, faith and trust.

This is, of course, extremely difficult, and some might say almost impossible.

Yet, in Jesus we have both an example and a helper.

We are, as I mentioned earlier, in Holy Week during the events of our Gospel reading. Jesus is facing a horrific death in a matter of days. Yet, he continues his work of teaching, healing and calling people to God's kingdom. He will have his moment of despair in Gethsemane, but even there he focuses on his Father's will.

So, Jesus knows the pressures and the difficulties of staying focused when everything seems lost and hopeless, and his power and help are available to us. We only need to keep looking to him and avoid feeding our fears.

Finally, Jesus warns his followers that they will face persecution. Here in this country, we're safe from physical harm for following our faith. Yet, across the world, 1 in 7 Christians currently live in situations where they face persecution, in the forms of violence, imprisonment and government oppression. 365 million Christians worldwide face serious persecution or discrimination.

So, does this mean we're near the end? Should we be worried? As we've already seen, worry is not what Jesus is aiming for here. Yes, there is persecution of Christians, and there always has been, but Jesus's focus is, again, on keeping our faith and perseverance going.

And, again, we face none of our difficulties alone because Jesus himself guides us and brings us safely home to God's kingdom.

It's hard to deny that today's Gospel reading is full of alarming words and images. Yet, Jesus's aim, I believe, is not to scare us but to make us ready. He wants us confident, trusting and focused on him, and not surprised by turmoil and difficulty. He wants us to not be overwhelmed by what goes on around us because we know the one who overcomes all evil and holds us safe – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

The Lord is always ready to listen; let us pray to him now.

Lord, we pray that you will strengthen our faith, focus our vision and protect us from the people and things that would draw us away from you. Give us steadfast faith and courage to stay firm even when things seem to be falling apart around us. Comfort and strengthen those who are persecuted for their faith and protect our brothers and sisters in danger.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for those who lead the nations. May they always seek peace and an end to wars and injustice. We pray for all the troubled areas of the world, both those in the news and those who've been forgotten by the world. Bring your healing to them all.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for the world we live in and its future. We pray for wisdom and courage to protect the vulnerable and do what is right and not fall prey to division and prejudice. We ask for your blessing on all parents and others who care for and protect children and teenagers. May we all live up to our responsibility to care for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for the victims of disasters, famines, earthquakes and plagues; for all who are crying and for those who have no tears left. We pray for comfort, renewed strength and steadfast friends, remembering by name those known to us who are suffering in body, mind or spirit...

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for those who are nearing death and for those who have died; especially we pray for those who have died suddenly and unprepared. We lift to you now those known to us by name...Welcome them into your kingdom and give comfort to those who must deal with shock and grief.

Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We give you thanks, Lord God, that you always provide the grace we need to do the work you set before us, and that we do not go out into the world alone but with you at our side.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

All my hope on God is founded
Christ, from whom all blessings flow
Christ is our cornerstone
Christ, whose glory fills the skies
For the healing of the nations
Guide me, O thou great Redeemer
Judge eternal, throned in splendour
Shout for joy and sing
Sing to God new songs of worship
The Lord will come and not be slow
Thy kingdom come! on bended knee
Thy kingdom come, O God
What does the Lord require
You are the King of Glory

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)