

**Pentecost 28C.**

**November 13, 2022  
Church of the Messiah  
Chester, New Jersey**

**Isaiah 65:17-25**

**Canticle 9**

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

**Luke 21:5-19**

✠ You must have noticed. The seasons are changing. Even the air is different by fits and starts. One day it is cold and the next it is unexpectedly warm. The leaves have mostly fallen. There are a few red maples that insist on hanging on, denying the end of one time and the beginning of another for rest. Change is always in the air; but these months are particularly exciting with new friends from school, new possibilities, re-engaging with the ordinary activities of life. It can be a sort of spring as much as any other— even in autumn.

The lessons this morning reflect change. We come to the end of a long cycle of readings from Luke. It has been Jesus laying out the good news by example and parable. Our Lord has described a new way to live and to love. It is the in-breaking of a kingdom which we do not fully understand. Next week we celebrate Christ the King and, by implication, a new sort of kingdom of which we are all a part. And then it is the end and another year begins with Advent and telling of the Incarnation story.

I can understand that tradition gives us this passage for today. It speaks of destruction, terror, war and plague. Luke's words are not pleasant reading but they do speak about change, an end of a time, of Jesus telling us that there will be momentous change.

As the evangelist wrote he would have known about events that were close to his own time. Some forty years after the first Easter, while some of those who had been a part of the momentous events surrounding the ministry of our Lord may still have lived, there was a revolt in Judaea. The result was catastrophe, for the people and the land. They tried to defeat the world and failed. More and worse followed. It was as described in this chapter of Luke with war and rumor of war and famine and persecution and the desecration and destruction of the great Temple.

As we come to the end of a year I can understand a lesson that speaks about an end of times even if, thankfully, it is much less fearsome than what we have experienced ourselves. But what lesson should we draw? Where is our comfort? Some hear the words about the temple being torn down and look toward Calvary, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. A different sort of Temple is raised up. Fair enough. There is hope there even if oblique

In those ancient times there were two obvious choices. One was to despair and to be led astray, seeing it as an end time with no hope. Another was to dismiss what was happening around them. As human beings they would rather not deal with any of this, at least not too closely. We push events like this either off to a distance or to a different time. Luke's audience may not have been so different. We memorialize and sanitize. We listen to this passage and spiritualize. It is all to come in the distant future.

**But the words of Jesus that Luke records here do not really admit of deferral.** He warns them and therefore us that we will be challenged in our own lives. Our own struggles will be nothing like those of the first Christians or the ones who rebelled against Rome. But we have our struggles as well. As the promised kingdom breaks in upon us the changes will bring challenge. They will be profound. There will be a need to understand each other differently. We may need to love one another differently and more full. And all of that may be as frightening as war and insurrection. **But the comfort is in his words. If we are faithful in this he will give us our words and a wisdom which will overcome. We shall not perish but we shall gain our souls.**

In this season of change, before we begin another year, the Gospel reminds us that a time of change is always at hand. **For us, whether the temple stands or falls, it is always the time of the arriving Bridegroom, of the Christ.** It is not just the tumbling down of great buildings. It is the in-breaking of the kingdom. In this place he comforts us. We are given our own task. It is to preach the word in season and out. **It is to care for those who are without. It is to seek and serve the face of Christ in all persons, to respect the dignity of every human being. We feed the hungry and clothe the naked and so feed and clothe our Lord.** "Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right." Every one of us is called to welcome the kingdom.

The words of the prophet Isaiah remind us of what is in store. “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth.” **He does not ignore the work to be done; but neither does he despair. Instead he claims the promise.** “[Be]glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating. My chosen shall ...shall not labor in vain....”

**And the prophet sings:** “Surely, it is God who saves me; \* I will trust in him and not be afraid. Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \* for the great one **is** in the midst of you... the Holy One of Israel.” Even so Lord Jesus quickly come. **AMEN.**