

November 13, 2016

**Not One Stone**  
***Luke 21: 5-19***

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In what do you place your trust?

Perhaps when all is quiet and still...going well, we think we know where we place our trust.....

But if Jesus stood in this picture and said to us, soon this mountain will be reduced to rubble.....

Would we believe it?

This morning's earth quake and tsunami in New Zealand reminds us of how temporary things of this world can be...

If anything this week invites us to reassess where we place our trust.

Do the results of the election south of us challenge us ...we trust it couldn't happen here...but...

Could we like many south of us wake up one day to find we no longer seem to fit in our own country

Fear for our future, our present, our freedoms, find our neighbours are not who we thought.....

On the other hand perhaps our remembrance of the world wars challenges us

With its reminders of the frailty of life, the vulnerability of government, the impermanence of buildings

The potential for misuse of power in our homes, our community our country and our world.

In this complex world, where do we put our trust?

It is not a new question—

But it is one that we need to consider because it underlies how we act and our life of faith.

As Jesus himself pointed out so long ago...

He challenging his followers to honestly assess where they placed their trust and choose wisely.

To explore this question and our answer, we will visit three different groups of followers of Christ.

At the time Jesus spoke the words we read this morning Jesus was in Jerusalem

It had become his habit to spend every day teaching in the temple Luke tells us

And he would do out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives

Crowds gathered each day to hear him.

That day, long ago, Jesus had drawn the attention of his followers to a widow,

Who with a penny quietly offering God all that she had, placed her trust in God over worldly things

Challenging them to consider whether they found their security in what they had or in God alone.

They listened, because later they remembered what Jesus said,

But at the time, they thought they knew where their trust was placed...the challenge will come later  
but like so many tourists they were more impressed by the temple—it is understandable:

And the temple was built at the highest point in Jerusalem

You could not go up to Jerusalem, without being aware of the temple,

Most of city of Jerusalem lay in the shadow of the walls of the great temple.

At the time of Jesus the it had been rebuilt by Herod the Great

IT was an impressive building, beautifully crafted and adorned

So the disciple's admiration is understandable.

It was amazing to see, wondrous to visit,

It was a gathering place, a place of worship,

It was symbolic of security, people's faithfulness and trust in their God.....

But for many, unnoticed, the building had itself become the basis for their faith.....

But Jesus challenged them to recognize that God was not embodied in the temple,  
nor defined by the temple...

That the temple was the work of human beings,

He warned them that the day would come when no stone would be left standing on another.

It seemed impossible for them to believe, the temple seemed to them indestructible.

Jesus within the building, so humanly small against the massive construction

Challenged his hearers to recognize where their trust lay....

To choose to trust Him above all else...not just that day when all seemed well

But in the future that was sure to come...with destruction and war, political victories and persecution, Jesus urged them, **no matter what** to live as followers, no matter what....  
Because God was faithful, a very present help in times of trouble.  
When Luke wrote his gospel, he wrote it for a specific community of believers first  
To help them to live as followers of Christ.  
They heard the passage we read this morning differently than we do today  
And the world had change profoundly since Jesus spoke those words a few years earlier.  
And yet they resonated in hearts and minds, as followers heard the truth  
God was with them, Christ would never forsake them,  
Followers of Christ were to stay the course,  
But the truth for them was the temple was a thing of the past  
What seemed so impossible to believe as the crowds stood in the monument that was the temple  
Had come to pass....not one stone remained on top of another...  
Perhaps a modern day illustration will help...imagine Jesus standing by these two buildings  
Saying, trust me above economics, or military, or human constructs.....because these will not last  
No one would have believed it.....until it happened.....and most of the western world  
Still feels the ache of its loss.....Luke did not gloss over the loss of the temple,  
rather like telling the story centred on Ground Zero  
he wrote his gospel centred on the temple from beginning to end.  
Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant,  
His family went up to the temple at least once a year, and Jesus continued the practice.  
Luke conveyed the central importance of the temple to the practice of Jewish faith  
As they heard about the life and teachings of Jesus, Luke's community felt the absence of the temple..  
They grieved the loss of the symbol of their faith a they still ached,  
But their faith was not in the temple, but on the God who was honoured for a time in the temple  
They may not have had stone monuments, but they had the Risen Christ and Holy Spirit to guide,  
To remind them of God's faithfulness, of Christ's teaching, of their mission in the world,  
To this group, Jesus teaching at the temple were affirmation that their trust was not misplaced...  
Heaven and earth would pass away, but Jesus words would not pass away. God is our refuge  
Luke's community heard Jesus teaching not just as reassurance but **as a call to action**,  
He invited them to follow him into the places where he would become known.  
To trust in Jesus whatever would befall.  
Through their faith and actions we have inherited that trust, but also that mission.  
Today we also struggle with the erosion of faith and where to place our trust.  
What makes you feel that way?  
Threats to your financial security? World events? Words of a doctor?  
Jesus stands beside these worldly temples and says, this will also pass away, it is temporary  
Do not put your trust in this.....trust in me....no matter what  
Do not be led astray whether by politics, conflict, or persecution.  
We are called to interpret our world through the lens of hope we have through Jesus Christ  
We are not to be mere spectators,  
But Jesus invites us to roll up our sleeves and get to work telling the story of God's faithfulness and  
love through our actions and words.  
To live out the story each moment of every day.  
Because the trust is God can be trusted and God is not finished with us or our world,  
Christ is working in this world, through actions of followers, like you and me.  
Guiding us through the Holy Spirit to show overwhelming love of God  
As individuals but also as the "church"  
However, we at times find ourselves putting our trust in things that will not last

Like buildings or traditions, rather than in the Risen Christ  
The unsettling truth for us as church is that things we thought we can trust are being torn down,  
Leaving us to find new ways to nurture faith and encourage believers to live out faith.  
In the next decade it has been predicted that our worship will be affected as profoundly  
As worship was affected by the destruction of the temple back in the first century  
PCC as a denomination will decline by 30% of members, and 25% of congregations will close....  
We are only one of many denominations facing such a crisis....  
Make no mistake we will be profoundly affected....  
we may hear those statistics like Jesus first disciples, as something that we cannot imagine happening.  
But the truth for us is the same as it was back in the first century.  
Heaven and earth will pass away.....but Christ's words will not pass away.  
Christ continues to invite us today **to be the temple** until Christ returns  
Building on our trust in Christ no matter what happens  
We are to show God's presence through our lives,  
Through the Holy Spirit we are to continue to tell the story of God's faithfulness and love  
Amid the rubble of broken dreams, adversity, even amid the decline in the denomination.  
We don't need to have all the answers, but to follow our Living Lord every day.  
As individuals and as Church, Christ's body in the world  
To continue to nurture faith, to encourage each other and to continue Christ's mission in the world  
So let's roll up our sleeves and get busy, there is much for us to do.  
Amen