

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“The days are coming when all that you see here there will not be left one stone upon a stone that will not be thrown down.
And they asked him, ‘When, Teacher?’”

Luke 21: 6

And they asked him, ‘When, Teacher?’ We always ask, “When? When we hear something dire or some prophesy of doom and destruction. We always ask when so we can prepare ourselves. Jesus himself would be dead very soon and none of them knew that. The temple would ultimately be destroyed in 70AD when the Romans came in with their army and put down in brutal fashion a Jewish revolt against Roman authority. That Temple would never be rebuilt. That Temple has never been rebuilt. But the other things that Jesus prophesied—wars and insurrections, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, powerful earthquakes, famines, plagues, awesome sights (Raging fires? Melting glaciers? Rising seas?) Believing Christians seized and persecuted, handed over to synagogues and prisons, hailed before tyrants and despots because of the name of Jesus Christ. Yes, all of that has happened. Is happening.

And so what counsel does Jesus give? “Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself will give you a wisdom in speaking (words and a wisdom) that your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will be handed over even by those closest to you and some will be put to death (Throats slit, crucifixions, assassinations, shootings, etc.). You will be hated because of my name but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will save your lives.”

Persist. Persevere. Hang in there. Prepare yourselves. Put on a mantle of trust in me and in the power of my Spirit says the Lord. Why is this set of readings being read on this Sunday? Because next Sunday is the feast of Christ the King which is the last Sunday in the liturgical year. The following Sunday we will enter the Advent Season when the Church begins a new liturgical year and we pass from final judgment to a season of hope which culminates in Christmas with the birth of the Christ child. What is described above—all of it—is real world stuff. These are the kinds of things that are happening. But we are to be assured that the whole world is in his hands. Now and forever. Even when it does not seem to be so, in actuality it is. The question is whether we will choose to put our faith in the word that Jesus speaks even when our experience seems to contradict what he says. Can we do that? That is the question of the week.