



Matthew 24:1–2

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

Reflection

(Today’s reflection is given by Craig Tub-

man)

Jesus has left the building. For a moment we breath out, don't we? I can't think of a more intense chapter than Matthew 23. Jesus has been ruthless with the religious leaders and we have followed that for the past few weeks. 'Hypocrites,' 'white washed tombs,' 'brood of vipers,' you cannot finish reading chapter 23 of Matthew without the clear understanding that Jesus condemns the whole approach of the religious leaders. Then in chapter 24 verse 1, Jesus leaves the building.

The building that we are talking about is the temple in Jerusalem, the building that represented the Israelite nation. It was who they were, an intersection of building and identity that we only have glimpses of in

our modern context.

A modern example was the Twin Towers in New York – the symbol of capitalism, wealth and the American Dream. Or the Australian war memorial in Canberra – a symbol of sacrifice, service and the underdog spirit. Or the Opera House in Sydney – the symbol of class, beauty and a city ahead of the rest. It's the symbol of what we are. And all symbols of identity like these are by necessity spiritual.

The spirit of capitalism that the Twin Towers represented was a spiritual connection. That is, it is a connection to a larger story, full of the promises of hope, happiness and fulfilment through the accumulation of wealth and the potential of the American to achieve.

The spirit of the underdog, the Anzac spirit, represented in Anzac day and in our war memorials (and places like RSL clubs where we go for Anzac day) is a spiritual connection. That is, it is a connection to a larger story, a story of identity and sacrifice; we have temples and we have holy days where the nation takes a day of rest.

Sure there may not be clearly defined gods associated with each building, but there is certainly worship and worship always betrays a belief in some sort of god-like power, even if that god is money or patriotism.

The temple in Jerusalem was not just a symbol of national identity, it was also deeply and observably spiritual because it tied Israel with God. It was the symbol that God

was with them; that God had chosen them, protected them, knew them – that he was with them. Something of that magnitude needs to be big.

In our passage today the disciples remark on how grand the temple is, as they are leaving it. And it was at this point that Jesus dropped the bombshell that it will be destroyed; not a stone will be left standing.

Now condemning religious leaders is one thing. Sure, people can get things wrong, the leaders had clearly lost their way, but condemning the temple is entirely different. It is unthinkable! That would be saying that God has got it wrong. And if the temple falls and no stone is left on another it not only makes God out to have failed but

would also spell the end of the people of Israel. For the temple is their symbol.

Jesus has left the building and in more ways than one it would appear. What's he on about?

Jesus words could be a reference to the actual destruction of the temple. This was a real time historical event that took place in 70 AD under Emperor Titus during what is known as the first Jewish Roman war. These words from Jesus act as future prophecy and history proves him right! But I think there is more going on here than just future prediction of war.

In John's account of Jesus' teaching he gives us a hint in chapter 2 of his text. When clearing the temple the people ask

for a sign of his authority to do so and John records Jesus' reply, 'Destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days'.

This remark was ridiculed at the time; no one could rebuild such a structure in three days! But John then goes on to note, with the benefit of hindsight; 'But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead his disciples recalled what he had said.'

Again, this is a chance for us to put the pieces together. Throughout Matthew's Gospel there has been a theme of the Kingdom of Heaven coming into the world. Jesus has presented himself as the one with the power of God himself. The religious leaders haven't done their job and the temple, whilst directed by God to be built, has now

reached its use by date. Why? Because what the temple represented has shown up! It was the sign of God's presence with Israel. You can't get any more personal, more present, than physically arriving!

The temple will be destroyed not because God has failed but because God has won! And like an audio cassette or a video cartridge, the physical building that was the temple has now become obsolete, it's been successfully superseded. Whilst the disciples are wowed by its size and beauty, its usefulness is now over. God is present through his Son. The disciples are standing, physically, between two temples – a stone building and a person – and Jesus is making sure they notice the one that really counts.

Here at Church Hill Anglican, we have two beautiful buildings. Both St Philip's and the Garrison are large, historic., sand-stone-wrapped buildings. We love our buildings and we're blessed to have them as our church homes. But the modern day temple is not made from bricks and mortar, it's a person, it's Jesus himself.

And our church is not the building, it is the people who are united under Jesus seeking his grace and guidance in everyday life. Like the disciples standing in wonder of the temple whilst having their backs turned to Jesus, it can be all too easy to misplace our wonder.

Jesus is wonderful. He is your sacrifice who bears the price of your sin. He is your Lord who leads you in a life of love. He is your

priest who speaks to the Father on your behalf. He is your brother who knows your pain. He is your light who reveals the truth. He is your doctor who heals your wounds. He is your king who fights on your behalf and he is your God who invites you into an eternal banquet.

Think & Pray

Reflect today on what may be taking your wonder and worship away from Jesus. Ask God to guide you by his Spirit back to what really matters.

Jesus has left the building and in doing so has made way for a daily and personal walk with God himself. Amen.