

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 25
Saturday, November 13, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, November 14, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“The House of God”

Mark 13:1-13

As we have been working through the prophet Zechariah in our Sunday morning Bible class, we have spoken quite a bit about the temple in Jerusalem and the need for the exiles who returned from Babylon to get busy and build the temple. But as we talked about in class: the value of the temple is not in the “wonderful stones” or great buildings.

The temple which was built in the days of Zechariah was, in fact, torn down in the days of King Herod so that a bigger, fancier temple could be built. As we have seen in our study of Zechariah, God commanded for the temple to be rebuilt because God is moving forward with His ultimate plan of salvation. At the temple which bears His name, God will take the sins of the people off of people and onto His Most Holy Place – onto the Ark of the Covenant itself. At the temple, God will make atonement with the blood of the scapegoat on Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement.

In the days of the prophet Zechariah, the temple must be built so that God's plan to rescue His people will keep moving forward. As you continue to read through the words of Zechariah, we ultimately see the focus of God's plan in the words read each year as we prepare to celebrate and remember the Passion of our Lord: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" [Zech. 9:9].

In Zechariah, the prophet goes on to say how God will bring peace and freedom through "the blood of My covenant with you." What we hear in our Gospel reading today is Jesus speaking to His disciples on Tuesday of Holy Week. He has already entered Zion, entered Jerusalem on a donkey. He is two days away from celebrating the Passover with His disciples and revealing how the "blood of the covenant" will become a much more impactful and relevant part of the lives of the disciples and the church.

Christ our Lord has become the real Temple. Jesus Christ is now "the name that is above every Name, that at the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," as St. Paul reminds us in letter to the Philippians. He is the "Word made flesh which made His dwelling among us" as John tells us in the opening of His Gospel.

The “great buildings” which the disciples are marveling about will be thrown down by the Romans in 70 AD. With the new and better covenant established in Christ, with the blood of the covenant “given and shed for you for the remission of sins” the real Temple in Jerusalem is the person of Jesus.

Jesus even says to the Chief priests and Pharisees, “tear down this Temple, and in three days, I will raise it up again.”

In our Epistle reading from the Letter to the Hebrews, we get insight into God’s ongoing work as His plan of salvation keeps moving forward. Jesus “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.” He performs His priestly duties and makes a blood sacrifice. But this is a new and better covenant: “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more” is the promise of God which is a most comforting message.

At the Jewish temple, only the high priest, and only one day per year (the Day of Atonement), could the most holy place of God be approached. The blood of Jesus covering our sins has opened “the curtain” for all of us – torn in two from top to bottom at the moment Christ died and victory was complete.

Now, we are told “we have a great priest over the house of God.” That is an interesting line there in Hebrews 10. We are told in Hebrews 3 that Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house, but Jesus is greater than Moses – just as the

covenant Jesus brings is greater than the covenant of Moses. “We have a great priest over the house of God.”

But the “house of God” of which we speak is not a building made of wood or stone. Jesus is the true “Temple.” And Jesus reminds us in John 14 that “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you (14:20). The “house of God” is Christ’s church. You can rightly say that the church is the collective body of Christians, but you cannot separate the “house of God” from body of Christ. As Paul tells us, He is the head, we are the members of the body. He is the Vine, we are the branches.

“We have a great priest over the house of God.” How comforting it is to know that the One who is greater than Moses; the One who came to establish the new and better covenant; the One who had authority to ride into Jerusalem as the King and bringer of salvation is here with us now, and is in you and always present.

There will come a day when all of the stones and great buildings, even the sun, moon, and stars will be thrown down. Even when that day comes, the Lord will be with you. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, pandemics and such. “Do not be alarmed.” God’s plan of salvation keeps moving forward. And God’s plan of salvation continues to include you. Amen.