

FAITH @ HOME

Week of November 17, 2019

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Luke 21:5-19

REFLECT: Hundreds of times, the Bible advises us to not be afraid. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we are continually reminded to “fear not,” for God is always with us.

As the disciples admire the beautiful temple, Jesus warns that someday, all of these stones will fall down. Naturally, his friends are curious, and want to know when this will be. Jesus goes on to describe terrible and scary things that will happen. The message of Jesus is often called the “good news,” but today’s lesson sounds a lot like bad news, doesn’t it? But Jesus is clear with his friends: they should not listen to anyone who claims to know God’s timing. Ultimately, the when and how are unimportant; God will always be there, even when things are scary and confusing.

Just as Jesus told the Sadducees to not apply earthly rules to heavenly things, we are reminded of that wisdom today. The stones of the temple will pass away, and frightening things will happen. We do not know when, nor should we even speculate! Our times are in God’s hands. In spite of the terrifying events Jesus describes, this is a passage of hope, not fear!

RESPOND: Children’s stories are full of tales of brave heroes. Who is your favorite hero? It’s important to remember that everyone is scared sometimes. Heroes aren’t brave because they aren’t afraid; they show faith and perseverance in spite of their fear. Courage and fearlessness are not the same! As Jesus tells us, our endurance will save our souls. In the Way of Love, we are called to GO: to cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus. Plan some sharing time as a family: what is a fear you have bravely faced or pushed through? How can you better trust in God? How can you live like Jesus, even if it is scary?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: AMANDA WISCHKAEMPER



Amanda Wischkaemper is devoted to telling and hearing stories, building relationships, and finding reasons to laugh. She is a professional actor, dialect coach, theatre educator, and dog-person. In her 13th year of Episcopal Children’s Formation, she currently serves as Director of Children’s Ministry at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, alongside her Music Director husband (Mark), and turbo-toddler (Abby).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Isaiah 65:17-25

REFLECT: There are always times of hardship and sadness, but God promises us joy to come. This reading from the prophet Isaiah is a message to people who have lived through great suffering and are looking for hope. The people of Israel had survived exile and a painful journey returning to their homeland. Isaiah offers numerous examples of God's promises of better times ahead. He tells the people that God asks them to put those memories of bad times away and rejoice. How do you think they would have responded?

Most of us can think of a time when we felt so bad, we thought we would never feel happy again, even if it was just a short time of unhappiness. But Isaiah says that God wants us to know that things will always be better again. The word rejoice is not one we use often enough. What if we all woke up every day rejoicing in the world around us? We can rejoice in our friends and everyone who loves us, in our homes and the things that make us happy, and in the beauty of the world around us.

RESPOND: This week, take a walk and look at things around you in a new way – a joyful way. Watch the leaves blowing on the trees, the birds flying, and the cracks in the sidewalk. Make a list of the things that delight you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa Puccio is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 21:5-19

REFLECT: There have been lots of books written and movies produced explaining how the end of the world will come—what will happen when Christ returns or is about to return. People have spent endless hours trying to figure out how they will know when the time is. Other times, people justify wars, hurricanes and other natural disasters, poverty, and disease as God’s will or God’s punishment.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus acknowledges horrible things will happen before the end of time, but he is not telling his disciples these things, or us, so we can calculate a date or use them to defend the belief that war, natural disasters, and disease are God’s will. Jesus tells us these things so that we can continue to live in hope. Jesus knows these things will occur not because God desires them, but because we are living in a broken world due to our humanity not to God’s punishment.

RESPOND: It is hard to understand how God, who we know is all-loving and all-powerful, doesn’t step in to prevent these atrocities. Sometimes it even makes us really angry and we question our faith. Has that happened to you? Other times we hear people declaring, “God made this happen to teach us a lesson” or some version of that. How can you respond? Spend some time talking about how we as Christians are called to tell another narrative. What words would you choose? How would you behave?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 21:5-19

REFLECT: My kindergartner jumped into the car after school and with the force of a hay-fever-induced sneeze, began enumerating the dangers of bottled water. Because of bottled water, she was personally responsible for the hole in the ozone, the melting polar ice caps, and the near-extinction of polar bears. Having brought herself to a frenzy, she burst into a puddle of tears in her car seat. All this came after my innocent question, “How was your day?”

That seems to be what happens in today’s Gospel, too. Some of Jesus’ disciples were speaking about the beauty of the temple, and Jesus said something like, “Yeah, so things are about to change. Big time.” Much like my kindergartner’s response to a well-meaning lesson on recycling and conservation, their response was one of fear. “When is this going to happen? What will be the signs?”

Jesus tells the people that hard things are going to happen and how he would want them respond. He assures them that they will see hard times, but that their belief in him will not be in vain.

One takeaway from this scripture is that nothing that we encounter in this life goes to waste. The hard things (war, plagues, earthquakes, betrayal) are part of our human experience. God is in the business of reusing, renewing, and recycling us. And while Luke doesn’t tell us how the people responded to this reassurance, I can tell you that a bit of time at home in my lap, crying a few more tears, and asking all the questions, made a huge difference in the life of my kindergartner. Have you spent time with God over the hard things in your life?

RESPOND: Have you ever noticed that the Recycle symbol looks a bit like a sign of the Trinity? Journal about how God is reusing, renewing, and recycling you in this season of your life. Bring your hard things and fears to God, ask questions, and even in the hardest of times, know that God is with you.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KARIANN LESSNER



KariAnn Lessner has led youth and children’s ministries in The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas for over twenty years. Currently the Minister for Children and Families at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, she loves serving as a summer camp session director at Camp Allen and is a frequent speaker to women’s groups throughout Texas. In addition, she produces the podcast “You Brew You,” where she sits down with folks to share what God is brewing in their lives in the hopes that each person is infused with grace and courage by the other’s faith. She enjoys spending time with her family, hammocking, reading, and sipping sun tea in the great outdoors.

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