

Pentecost 26 – B  
November 17, AD 2024

ELCIC Sermons by Email  
Pastor Peter Lisinski

### ***“ABOUT THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE”***

(Text: Mark 13:1-8)

As Jesus affirms in today’s Gospel, the temple in ancient Jerusalem was the pride and joy of faithful Jewish believers. Indeed, down to this very day hundreds of residents of Jerusalem, as well as tourists from all over the world, and of all religions, visit the only part of the temple that remains standing – the so-called “Wailing Wall”.

Before its first destruction by the Babylonian army of King Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century BC; and after its restoration was finally completed in Jesus’ lifetime under King Herod – only to be permanently destroyed again by the Roman military in 70 AD – one of life’s greatest pleasures and privileges among God’s chosen people was attending temple worship. Even those who did not live in Jerusalem, or anywhere close to the Holy City, did their best to make the journey to Jerusalem at least once a year.

As pilgrims entered through the ancient gates of the Holy City, they were greeted with a breath-taking vision of Mount Zion; and as countless psalms in the Bible reflect, many were overwhelmed with joy once they found themselves actually standing inside the temple, within arm’s length of the Ark of the Covenant, located in its innermost sanctuary, known as “the Holy of Holies”. As from the Holy of Holies the mystery of the divine presence radiated within the hallowed walls, the magnificent structure itself projected the glorious vision of divine majesty through all Jerusalem, and the world beyond. The very name of the Holy City, Jerusalem, affirms and proclaims God’s covenant promise. The name ‘*Jerusalem*’ means “foundation of peace”.

Peace remains an urgent need for Jerusalem, as our news headlines remind us daily; and peace remains the desperate hope for the whole global community, of which Jerusalem is the pre-eminent symbol. The Kyrie of our church’s Holy Communion liturgy prays: “For the peace of the whole world, for the wellbeing of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.”

Central to peace on earth and the unity of all people is the wellbeing of God's people. And central to the wellbeing of God's people, indeed of all people, is the worship of God. Worship is God's primary method for nurturing all people toward the fulfillment of our common humanity. The very word '*community*' essentially speaks of the humanity all people created in God's image have in common. And, of course, praying for the peace of our global community in worship, commits us to *servicing* God's vision in our daily vocation of servanthood, which fulfills the purpose of all faithful worship assemblies – from the ruins of the ancient temple in Jerusalem to the modern temples in which God's people are privileged to assemble today.

God's covenant promise, and humanity's common hope for peace and unity is reflected in the central word and embodied in the foundational sacrament of Christian faith: '*communion*'. In the holy communion of saints – *in* God's house, *with* God's people, *around* God's Word, *at* the altar, *under* the cross, we learn to love God as "Our Father", as Jesus himself reveals God in the Lord's Prayer; and we learn to love our *neighbours*, around the corner and around the world, as sisters and brothers, united in Jesus Christ, members of God's one human family.

In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has established the foundation of the promised New Jerusalem, where there will no longer be any need for earthly temples, as prophesied in the final chapter of the Bible's final book of Revelation: "Its temple is the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb. And the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 2:22-23).

You and I are God's holy people, called and sent to reflect that light of God's glory and love in Christ to the world around this church building, and all the church buildings in which we are blessed to gather today.