

Stand Firm

2018-11-18 - Year B - Pentecost 11-13 - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas

Daniel 12:1-4; Psalm 16; Hebrews 10:31-39; Mark 13:14-23

The Abomination of Desolation

- A prophet is a person who has been called to deliver a message from God to the people of God. Most often, this is a word of rebuke or encouragement, but sometimes it is a foretelling of something which will happen in the future.
- Sometimes prophecy doesn't make any sense until after what has been predicted comes to pass.
 - Daniel 12:8-9 - The words given didn't make sense to Daniel.
- Prophecy often has multiple layers of meaning. The Abomination of Desolation is an example:
 - 167 BC - The pagan emperor Antiochus IV sets up an altar to Zeus in the Temple and offers pigs on the altar. "Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the 145th year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of whole burnt offering...Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of anyone or if anyone adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death...And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was upon the altar of whole burnt offering" (1 Maccabees 1:54-59).
 - In the Gospel today, Jesus makes significant reference to Daniel's prophecy and says that there is more meaning to be squeezed out of it.
 - AD 70 - The destruction of the temple by the Romans. "We can read, in the historian Josephus, the terrible tale of the siege of Jerusalem; how people starved, ate their own babies to stay alive, fought each other both for scraps of dirty food and for small-scale political gains in the factional fighting, more Jews being killed by other Jews than by the invading Romans. Jesus clearly wanted his followers to get out and run. There was no place for misguided national loyalty, for staying to the bitter end of that appalling time."¹
 - There are hints here that this prophecy may also point to a future time that has not yet come when Jesus will return

What can we glean

- This prophecy of Jesus, and its fulfillment in AD 70 with the fall of the Temple, is yet another verification of the fact that Jesus is who he said he was.
 - There is so much OT prophecy that points to the coming of Jesus.
 - This is a prophecy spoken by Jesus which later did come to pass.
 - We have a God who always keeps his promises. This is a great comfort!
- The destruction of the temple is a powerful symbol of the new covenant in Jesus' blood.
 - At Jesus' death on the cross, the curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mark 15:38).

¹ Tom Wright, Mark for Everyone (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 182.

- As the book of Hebrews tells us in great detail, there is no longer a need for a temple in which to offer animal sacrifices, because Jesus has offered himself for us in his death upon the cross.
- While the destruction of the temple would have been a devastating thing to watch, it was a structure whose usefulness had come to an end.
 - My tearfulness over our little Saturn as it was towed away.
 - It was not just transportation for me, it was a symbol of God's provision.

Stand Firm in the Day of Tribulation

- These words to the first-century disciples explain how to live faithfully in times of persecution, and we would do well to study these words today so that we, too, will be ready for persecution when it comes.
 - High profile legal cases regarding religious liberty.
 - Wedding cake for a homosexual couple
 - Jack Phillips, a Colorado baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a homosexual couple.
 - The supreme court recently ruled in favor of Phillips, but, according to his lawyer, "It's been a long, six-year battle where his family business, his income, has been hanging in the balance. He's also, obviously, handling a large volume of calls himself and looking out for the protection of his family, to be candid."²
 - Medical professionals being pressured to perform procedures or provide drugs which violate their conscience.
 - Church Shootings
- We must also remember the physical suffering and death that Christians continue to face around the world, even today. We must pray for those who suffer, and remember that it could easily happen to us at some point in the future.
- How are we to respond in the face of persecution? Stand firm - Philippians 1:27-29.
- Jesus says something similar - Mark 13:9-11.
- There will always be people in our lives who are opposed to the Gospel, but we must not let the fear of these people get in the way of our proclamation of the Good News to the ends of the earth.
- We can trust that if the time comes for us, God will provide us with both the strength to endure as well as the words to speak in that hour.
- Remember the words of St. Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." (Romans 1:16, ESV)