

CROSSROAD



From Praise to Passion

A six week journey for the season of Lent
2022

Week #3

Mark 13; Matthew 23:37-39; 24 & 25; Luke 21:5-38

“It's the End of the World as We Know It”

Scripture Stories: Jesus foretells the future to his disciples.

Focus Scripture: Mark 13:36-37 "Don't let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. What I say to you I say to everyone: Watch for his return!"

Overview: Last week Jesus was questioned by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. He displayed his debate skills as he turned the tables on his questioners. This week we will hear Jesus (in three Gospels) speak of what will happen some time in the future. He has hard things to say. Take some time to contemplate for whose benefit this was said. For whose benefit was this written? By the end of this session, we will most likely have more questions than answers, and a lot to wonder.

SOME DEFINITIONS:

FIG TREE, again: References to the Fig tree, are symbolic of Israel, as a nation. Two crops of figs can be produced each year. The first or breba crop develops in the spring on last year's shoot growth. The main fig crop develops on the current year's shoot growth and ripens in the late summer or fall. The main crop is generally superior in quantity and quality, but some cultivars produce good breba crops. It is possible that "this generation" (also interpreted as "this nation" in verse 30, is referencing the generation or nation experiencing the second harvest.

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION: A phrase from the book of Daniel, referring to a time in the second century BCE, when a pagan king set up pagan sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem.

CULTURAL AND/OR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

We're reading some alarming words from Jesus this week. Historically, Matthew, Mark and Luke were written around 70-80 CE, with Mark being the first. It is unclear if Mark was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Mark, then, is writing an account of an historical dialogue

Some words about Matthew 25 from Elisabeth Johnson

Remembering again the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven," it is clear that being ready for Jesus' return means doing the will of the Father.

And what is the will of the Father? Jesus gives us abundant clues throughout his teaching in Matthew. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, for instance, those who inherit the kingdom are those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, took care of the sick, and visited those in prison. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it to me" (25:40). In fact, Jesus is already among us, identifying with the lowly, and how we respond to his presence is a crucial indicator of the health of our relationship with him.

Another important clue to the will of the Father comes at the end of Matthew's Gospel, as the risen Jesus tells his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

(Elisabeth Johnson is an ELCA pastor and missionary serving in Cameroon as a professor at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Meiganga.)

