

“God of the Moment”
Message by DD Adams
Providence United Methodist Church
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Today’s text is taken from the 13th chapter of Mark’s gospel, verses 1 through 8. I’ll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. As Jesus left the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, look! What awesome stones and buildings!” Jesus responded, “Do you see these enormous buildings? Not even one stone will be left upon another. All will be demolished.”

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will these things happen? What sign will show that all these things are about to come to an end?”

Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you. Many people will come in my name, saying, ‘I’m the one!’ They will deceive many people. When you hear of wars and reports of wars, don’t be alarmed.

These things must happen, but this isn’t the end yet. Nations and kingdoms will fight against each other, and there will be earthquakes and famines in all sorts of places. These things are just the beginning of the sufferings associated with the end. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. God we pray for you to bless the reading, hearing, understanding, and most importantly, bless the doing of your word. Amen.

In the text just read, Jesus makes this pronouncement just prior to his passion; it serves as an introduction to the next two chapters. Jesus said the stones of the Temple would come tumbling down, and about four decades later it was destroyed; and it was never rebuilt again. Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask him

privately, “Tell us, when will these things happen? What sign will show that all these things are about to come to an end?”

Jesus doesn’t answer their question directly when the disciples asked about the wars, earthquakes, and famines will happen. He states that the coming of these things is only the beginning of the suffering—not the end; they’re like labor pains. Jesus does say later on in this chapter that “. . . nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the Father knows.”

Just a word about Apocalyptic or end-time literature. It can present a real temptation that can lead to a calendar of events for the future. That kind of emphasis misunderstands the purpose. Jesus said, no one knows the day or hour.

God’s people have been delivered from that kind of anxiety! That’s why Jesus died and was raised—so we might have abundant life now! And this life we’ve been given from God is here and now. God wants us to focus on the present moment. What we all need is a persistence that stays glued to godly principles so our witness stays compatible with what we say we believe. To focus on the past, which is unalterable, or to be distracted with what the future holds takes us away from the now! We’re called to live in the now!

And when we’re tested, life happens. It’s when times get difficult. We lose our job, we get sick, we get laid off, our parent’s pass away, we get divorced, we get in a car accident, we lose our home, any kind of loss can be a temptation to throw in the towel—even momentarily. In the heat of a difficult time you can lose a lot; it’s not worth the price. God wants us to cling to him and stay in the here and now.

The disciples brought up the concept of signs—such as natural disasters. Signs can be used literally and symbolically. They’re ripe for creating guesswork and reading things into the future. People have been connecting national disasters to the judgment of God since the beginning of time.

In this passage, Jesus is talking about the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. They want to know when? For us to attempt to predict the future does nothing but create intellectual puzzles for end-time theories; it's a distraction from the present. Bottom line is this—it doesn't matter what the future is because God says to not be afraid.

Mark's gospel was written to people who were struggling just like we are. Then and now there were wars and all kind of disruptions like earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, and ethnic cleansing—terrible things. Then and now heretics came along and made claims for being some sort of messiah.

This passage is intended to bring comfort. It can provide encouragement and the assurance of Christ's presence during difficult times. No matter what your struggle is or our nations' or the world's challenge, Jesus says don't be alarmed. Don't be afraid!

My point is this. God is a God of the here and now. God is *right* here for you *right* now. God is in this present moment and every moment to encourage, comfort, and transform your thinking so you can live without fear and anxiety. We can let go of the past, not focus fretfully on the future, and embrace abundant life right now!

Have you ever wanted to know when something would happen? If we just do what we know to do that's all we need to know! Stay prepared and be ready. Continue giving, praying, living right, reading the Bible, and loving and forgiving each other. We're to stay alert and be in relationship with God. We're to take advantage of the moment and offer it to God when we're struggling and feel anxious or angry.

We submit wrong thinking to God and aim to get our heart in a right position to love God and neighbor. When we do what we know to do, we're headed in a direction that brings peace and comfort to our troubled soul.

Look for opportunities to engage with God. Look for the activity of God in every moment. Practice the presence of God. Serve God, give a smile, minister to someone, open a door, help with a church dinner, teach Sunday school, be a trustee. When we practice looking for God, and we bring our gifts to the Lord, we're being about the business of God. We're focused on the here and now.

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer, and theologian. He gives us some food for thought about God and our thinking. He says, "The real enemies of our life are the "oughts" and the "ifs." They pull us backward into the unalterable past and forward into the unpredictable future. But real life takes place in the here and now.

God is a God of the present. God is always in the moment, be that moment hard or easy, joyful or painful. When Jesus spoke about God, he always spoke about God as being where and when we are. 'When you see me, you see God. When you hear me you hear God.' God is not someone who was or is or will be, but the One who is, and who is for me in the *present moment*. That's why Jesus came to wipe away the burden of the past and the worries for the future. He wants us to discover God right where we are, here and now."

In John 17, this is what Jesus said about eternal life "This is eternal life: to know [God], the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent." This is abundant life friends!

Eternal life begins the very moment we accept Christ into our hearts, and the Holy Spirit begins the process of work we call sanctification. It's a lifetime journey of being transformed into becoming like Jesus. It's taking every moment captive to engage with God and live and serve him. Let's not wait till we get to heaven. Let's do what we can now to enter into the present moment with God and be about the business of the Lord. Amen.

