

This is what happened to a Texas minister who was scheduled to speak at an all-day conference. He was running late because his alarm had failed to ring. In his haste to make up for lost time, he cut himself while shaving. Then he found his shirt was not ironed. To make matters worse, running to his car he noticed a tire was flat. Disgusted, and by this time thoroughly distraught, the minister finally got underway with a sudden burst of speed. Racing through town he failed to notice a stop sign and rushed through it. As fate would have it, there was a policeman nearby, and in just moments he heard the scream of a siren. Jumping out of his car, the agitated minister said sharply, "Well, go ahead and give me a ticket. Everything else has gone wrong today." The policeman walked up and said quietly, "Sir, I used to have days like that before I became a Christian."

Today the news always shows us the negative events going on our country. School shootings. Corporate shootings. Bombings. Murders. Incredibly bad weather. And when our press does report news from other countries, it again shows us negativity, even though there have to be countless stories of good deeds that would remind us of the good people all around the world. We live in a society where the media focuses on the negative. Today Jesus teaches us how we live with hope in a world that seems to be hopeless.

In Luke 21:5 Jesus engages in public dialogue with people about the beautiful Jerusalem temple. In Jesus' time Jews were admiring the physical beauty of the Temple as much as tourists admire the many wonders of the world. Jesus' disciples also marveled at the beauty of the temple Herod built, the enormous stones of its walls, and the wealthy worshipers coming to dedicate their gifts. At the moment Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

As Jesus said, Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed in 70 AD. To Jews the destruction of the temple means that the world of meaning is shaken to its foundation. Jerusalem represented to Jews and even disciples their whole world, their whole world of meaning as people of God. The destruction of the Temple was the destruction of their hope.

We also have such times when our world is shaken to its foundation and almost falls apart. You may have lost a loved one, husband, wife, brother, sister, parent, child, friend. The well-loved voice is silent, the house empty, an aching heart and a hollowness within, your world seems to have ended.

You might be involved in the breakdown of a relationship, facing a divorce, going through a messy break up. What seemed like a great future suddenly disappeared as your world seems to fall apart.

You may have received bad news of an illness and be struggling to come to terms with it and to cope with what is happening and may happen in the future. It seems the destruction of your world.

Whenever these kinds of things happen our world falls apart. Those people we have relied on; those things we have trusted; those events we have put faith in, have gone. These can be times of great testing; testing of our faith, testing of our belief in God, wondering whether there is a God. Times like this can shake our faith to its core.

Jesus told His disciples that there would be wars, great earthquakes, famines and plagues. Moreover, before all this occurs, they would be arrested and persecuted because Jesus' name. they would be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends. They would be hated by all because of Jesus. It made them timid and hopeless. However, Jesus continued to say, "This will give you an opportunity to testify."

What does it mean we have an opportunity to testify? When our world falls apart, what do we testify?

Jesus teaches us that when our world falls apart, we do not be terrified. Rather we can have an opportunity to show hope because of the promises of God in Christ that “not a hair of your head will perish” and “by your endurance you will gain your souls”

Jesus promises his disciples and us, “for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.” Our powerlessness may be our most essential qualification. For those who do not know what to say and what to do at a crucial moment, “Don’t worry, it will come to you!” says Jesus, “you’ll be just fine; you’ll think of something at the last moment!” Jesus does not force us, but promises us, “I will give you words.” “I will be with you.”

As Jesus was talking about the bad news, he gave his listeners some hope. At the end of the passage Jesus told people “But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your souls.” Jesus has not deserted his disciples. And the same is true for us. In the midst of the turmoil of our lives, when our world seems to have collapsed, God, who has been with us, is still there. God, who has been faithful in the past, remains faithful today. God, who has lavished his love on us, hasn’t deserted us now in the time of need.

Jesus asks us that when we feel our faith tested, when we feel we are crawling along the darkest valley, when our world seems to be collapsing around us, we have to endure to the end and to keep God’s promises throughout our lives.

There is a man who had to decide whether to go to the church every Sunday, whether to pay his tithing every time his check came, whether to go to his meetings every time they were held. One day a friend asked him: “Why can’t you just decide once and for all which side you’re on? Why do you have to re-examine your

loyalty every time a decision is called for? You are spiritually reinventing the wheel over and over again, and you will never make any progress until you can build on what you already know.”

A few weeks later he called his friend and asked for a ride to some stake meetings. The friend was pleased he was going, and when he told him so, the man responded: “You know, I wouldn’t like it if my wife told me she had to decide every morning whether she still loved me or not, or if she told me she only stayed with me because she hadn’t found a reason to leave—yet. I guess the Lord is entitled to more of a commitment than that from me. I’m ready to stop reinventing the wheel and move on.”

In Jesus, God came into the world. He came to share in all the joys and sorrows of life, he came to know what life is like and to show us what God was like. And because he came, because he lived, because he died and rose again, he stands firmly with us in this life and reaches out to us, to you and to me when our world seems to be collapsing and falling apart. His love and peace comes to those caught in a storm. His joy and grace comes where faith encounters fear. Endure to the end and keep God’s promises. Don’t lose hope in Jesus Christ. God is with us.