

## St Pius & St Anthony 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year C Luke 21:5-19

Two weeks in a row now, we've heard Jesus challenge those who would turn the Temple into an idol. Last week we heard about the Temple's misuse as a place of exploitative commerce (bow before the money), so Jesus cleansed it by chasing out the merchants and moneychangers. And today, we hear about some people marveling at the Temple's elaborate decoration to the point of almost worshipping, the Temple itself. So, Jesus prophesies that one day (and soon) will come when the Temple will be levelled and gone (not one stone upon another left (Lk 21:6). And then what? It is only a building, they come and go. A monument to one generation is easily erased/cancelled by the next. It is the activity inside that Jesus is concerned with, not the external decoration.

Yet what exactly were the people so impressed with about this Temple? Josephus, a historian of that time, reported that the some of the building stone blocks measured 40 ft long, 12 feet wide and 18 feet high weighing hundreds of tons – what large blocks to have cut and moved for display. Knowing how it is all going to turn out, - maybe we could say like little red riding hood, "Oh what large rock blocks you have Temple" to hear back, "Yes, the larger/greater to fall and crush you with!"

But a further marvel about this Temple, we learned last week after Jesus said he could rebuild Temple in three days (Temple of His Body resurrected – John 2:19-20), and people responded that Herod had been working on the Jerusalem Temple Renovation/Expansion for 46 years. The time alone indicates how over the top this expansion project was (even considering normal schedule overruns). And this is one project of many that the Herod dynasty takes on through their years of ruling like tyrants. They had some project going on all the time (which also meant constant and heavy taxing of the people too), such as fortresses being built like the Antonia fortress which was attached to this Temple, but also the extravagant Herodium fortress up on a nearby mountain top, and the famous Masada fort further out in desert). And not just the Temple and forts, but Herod was also into building additional such as his luxurious palace at Caesarea Maritima, which was complete with its own swimming pool-the SEA-because it overlooked the Harbor port of the Sea! So, Herod knew how to lock in **perpetual building contracts**– He should have opened a road construction business too, because aren't we used to around here, eternal 'road or bridge construction' projects (a person can't drive 20-25 miles down an interstate/ parkway without hitting construction zone-yet how do we still hit so many potholes in road)?

So the Herodian Temple was quite a sight, but Jesus wants none of it. Don't get caught up in the glamour of fancy buildings, or the vanity of monument names (here today and gone tomorrow), Jesus wants true worship of the living God, not the mistaken worship of earth bound buildings. Jesus highlights the more

important value of what is going on (or supposed to be going in inside the Temple) Like when the man points up to the star in the sky, don't mistake the arm pointing, for the light of the star beyond it! Just like last week when Jesus cleansed the Temple, he is reminding us of the Temple's purpose. It is not what the Temple looks like, but what happens inside it that counts. Not how the building can be changed, but how the people worshiping inside can be changed. Jesus is emphasizing his point of restoring the Temple as a genuine House of Prayer again (Luke 19:46). The House is meant to change us, not us change the house. The Temple and worship in it, is meant to draw us more and more into what God intends for us, our sanctifying and our bettering, becoming more & more Christ-like. God's House for all of God's children. Jesus wanted the Temple to be a place where people grew, 1) closer to God but also 2) but also grew closer in solidarity to other children of God- one another by recovering a sense of divine compassion for every other human being. Marveling at what God has made -human beings in his image, instead of worshipping monuments man makes to glorify himself- Herod! (It is amazing to me that with all the Temple waste, no one ever got God's memo to King David way back in 2 Samuel 7:5, when God called out the human arrogance involved in such a prideful campaign – saying, “And you David, who I made, you would build me a house?”---David was justifying his own palace!)

In the gospel of Luke here, the Temple has been on Jesus' mind for several chapters. Every time it comes up, Jesus emphasizes the more important concern of human relationship, not real estate, but real relationships among people. Jesus wants the Temple to be the place where love of God and love of neighbor are one and the same.

We've heard these other Temple stories recently. The first was when the Pharisee and Tax collector went in Temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). One of them did it right, and one did it wrong (opposite of what you'd figure). The tax collector pleased God by his simple, humble prayer acknowledging God and honestly admitting his own sin, while the Pharisee only pleased himself, judging and condemning God's other child of the tax collector & then patting himself on the back as holy! The Temple should reinforce our need of each other and strengthen understanding and compassion for each other. And then the second recent Temple story, was when Jesus watched the little widow woman drop her meager (but major to her) two cents into collection bowl, and Jesus said she gave more than all the self-righteous Pharisees that day combined who made a display of their giving (Luke 21:1-4)! It is the spirit and the sacrifice behind the gift that makes it great. Why am I doing it, and do I feel it? this brings to light, pure prayer to God and pure concern for the other person. That is what the Temple is meant to do for us.

Our Temple-going, church going, is meant to draw us closer to God and all of God's people. Every visit to the Temple (church) should build faith stronger in

us, and deepen our care/consideration of others, especially their need. It is not the physical building that matters, but the spiritual work going on inside that God is concerned with. That is where the heart of Jesus is, and where he wants us to go/grow!

*“By your perseverance (faith-trust), you will secure your lives” Luke 21:19  
By perseverance (staying with Jesus), By faith (trusting in him), you will live.  
Habakkuk 2:4 “The just one shall live by faith”  
Quoted in NT in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38*

### Stones cry out

Luke 19: 39-40 “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He said in reply, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!” as he neared the Mount of Olives

Luke 19:44 “and they will not leave one stone upon another within you because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” Then he went into Jerusalem and cleansed the temple.....

Earlier, John the Baptist had said in Matthew 3:9 “Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”

1 Peter 2:5 “you also, like **living stones**, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.