**First Reading Daniel 12:1-3**

*The book of Daniel is an example of apocalyptic literature, which is full of strange visions and symbolism. Arising during times of great persecution, apocalyptic literature is concerned with God’s revelation about the end time and the coming kingdom of God, when God will vindicate the righteous who have been persecuted.*

1 “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

**Psalm 16**

1 Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you; I have said to the Lord, “You are my Lord, my good above all other.” 2 All my delight is in the godly that are in the land, upon those who are noble among the people. 3 But those who run after other gods shall have their troubles multiplied. 4 I will not pour out drink offerings to such gods, never take their names upon my lips. 5 O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; it is you who uphold my lot. 6 My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; indeed, I have a rich inheritance. 7 I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel; my heart teaches me night after night. 8 I have set the Lord always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. 9 My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope. 10 For you will not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see the pit. 11 You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

**Second Reading Hebrews 10:11-25**

*Images of worship and sacrifice are used throughout Hebrews to highlight what Christ has uniquely accomplished through his death. Because we have received forgiveness through Christ’s death, we live with sincere hearts by trusting in God’s promises and encouraging love and good works from each other.*

11 Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for

sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,” 13 and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds,” 17 he also adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. 19 Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

**Gospel Mark 13:1-8**

*In the last week of his life, Jesus warned his disciples concerning trials that were to come upon them and upon the world. He exhorts the listener: Do not be alarmed.*

1 As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” 2 Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” 3  When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4  “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” 5  Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

**Sermon**

There was a meme that I saw on Facebook a day or two ago that contained the following quote by Madeleine L’Engle: “God doesn’t stop the bad things from happening; that’s never been part of the promise. The promise is: I am with you. I am with you now until the end of time.” This seems to me to be a good focus statement for our Scripture readings today. Today we in are the gospel of Mark for the last time in this church year. Next week, the last Sunday of the church year on Christ the King Sunday we will be in the gospel of John. Interestingly enough, we started last church year in Advent in Mark 13. Now we find ourselves back in Chapter 13 on the last week of Mark.

At this time of year, we get into these passages in which Jesus teaches about calamity and adversity and his return. We have a word for this type of writing and teaching and that word is apocalyptic. The passage that we have from Daniel is another example of apocalyptic literature, and its important that we understand that Jesus’ teaching today follows a similar pattern to other apocalyptic literature. So, Jesus is not reinventing the wheel here and his disciples as well as the original audience of this gospel would have recognized that.

The 8 verses we have in front of us specifically deal with destruction caused by human beings as well as natural disasters. The passage begins with one of the disciples commenting on how large the stones of the Temple were. Jesus responds by saying that this large building made of these large stones would be destroyed. If you know your ancient history, then you know that in 70 AD that Temple was destroyed by the Romans. No doubt that was a terrifying, horrific experience, maybe for those disciples if they lived that long but certainly for the first readers of Mark’s gospel.

It is important to note that Jesus is speaking a specific event, addressing a specific situation in which the first Christians found themselves. That doesn’t mean that Jesus’ message isn’t going to resonate with us today. But it does mean that, while later in Ch 13 he speaks of his return, Jesus is not laying the foundation for some timeline of what is going to happen leading up to his return. Certainly, there have been plenty of calamities and wars and destruction between then and now and, even though some have believed these things were leading to Christ’s return, they have not. The Civil War…World Wars I and II and the Holocaust…9/11. Forrest fires in California, hurricanes in the south. Humanity continues to see

calamity and destruction. And while these things are unsettling and tragic and scary, these are not the end. They are an unfortunate part of being a sinful humanity that is part of a broken creation.

Some scholars have named this chapter of Mark’s gospel as Mark’s Farwell Discourse. In the gospel of John, Jesus talks to and teaches his disciples for 4 whole chapters. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus has much briefer departing words of encouragement for his followers. The idea that this Chapter might be Jesus’ departing message for his disciples is significant for helping us know what the message is for us this many years later.

Notice that when Jesus’ disciples ask him about when these things will be, Jesus’ response is, “Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.” Jesus doesn’t even enter a conversation about when or how. Instead, Jesus directs his followers to beware of being led astray in those times of destruction and calamity. Think about what happens to us when we experience some sort of traumatic experience. We are shaken to our core. And when I say ‘our core’ I mean, everything is shaken, even sometimes, what we thought could never be shaken…our faith. It is times like these that many of us ask the question, “Where is God in all of this?”

Jesus warns us, however, in our search for God during those trying times not to be led astray by those who will try to tell us that they could save us but who are only there to grab power and take advantage of us when we are vulnerable. There are always people throughout the ages who will try to capitalize on others’ fear and suffering. When everything around us and inside us has been shaken, we are looking for something to stabilize us and we are susceptible to being led astray. THIS is the teaching with which Jesus prepares his followers for those times that we all might face at some point. Do NOT be led astray by human beings who try to play Messiah when our defenses are down.

Our Messiah has already suffered, given his life for us. This is how we know that God is with us when calamity hits, when we are shaken. We have a suffering Savior who can be found with humanity wherever humanity is suffering. Remember that 3 times in Mark’s gospel, Jesus predicted his death. And each of those times, Jesus also pointed to his life-giving act as a model for the way in which those who bear his time will relate to others.

The one who bears the name of Christ in times of suffering and fear will take up their cross, deny themselves and follow Jesus. The one who bears the name of Christ in times of suffering and fear will welcome, will care for the child and other vulnerable groups of people of our time. The one who bears the name of Christ in times of suffering and fear is the one who is servant of all. This is what Jesus teaches throughout the gospel of Mark.

This is what Jesus wants those who bear his name in all times and places to understand, especially when human hearts and minds are most tormented, shaken, afraid, uncertain. God, through Christ is in our midst to bring us together to help and support one another, to give us strength and hope and comfort. When calamity, destruction, war happens the work of God through Christ is to remember that God is with us in all of these things and to look after and care for those struggling the most, following in the way of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.