



Proper 33, Year C – November 14, 2010

Luke 21 5.19

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

Two tons. An elephant. Three tons. An average farm tractor. That was the weight of some of the smallest stones used to create the Third Temple in Jerusalem and most weighed over ten. The site itself was the size of 29 football fields. The sheer size of it made Jerusalem in some ways a temple that had a city rather than a city with a temple. The building of it employed tens of thousands and after it was completed there were probably 20,000 people engaged by the Temple activities, from craftsmen, currency changers, dealers in sacrificial animals and blenders of incense. This massive Temple, this central place of worship, could be seen from miles away – a beacon in the distance calling, calling to the faithful.

And they came. From all around they travelled for days and weeks to be able to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. Families carrying provisions journeyed from far and wide to come and offer sacrifice to their God – the God of Israel who had freed them from slavery and lead them to the Promised Land. The joy, the ecstasy even, of the weary travellers is difficult if not impossible for us to comprehend. This Temple above all things brought a wondering tribe of people and grounded them in a particular place in a particular time. They had a home and surely, they were certain, this time would never end.

And then this Jesus guys shows up. Preaching messages of peace and love – he certainly couldn't be the great warrior saviour they had been expecting all of these years. However, his message was enticing and enchanting. He seemed to talk about having a relationship with God – directly with God! He seemed to be saying that caring for your neighbour, being generous with your gifts and trusting in him was – gasp – more important than buying the perfect unblemished animal to sacrifice!

Well, they listened. By the thousands they came and sat on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and they listened. Their hearts were lightened by the message but alas, even some of the faithful when they left packed their supplies and headed straight to the Temple. This guys message was all fine and good, but one had to make sure that they crossed all of their t's and dotted all of their I's and one did so by travelling to the Temple and making a sacrifice.

The temple; a beacon in the distance calling them, wooing them; their indestructible centre of worship that grounded these wandering Jews in a place and a time. And what do they hear from Jesus? They hear him say in reference to the Temple "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

Well now they knew for certain that this guy was a little crazy – nothing could destroy this Temple made of ten ton stones.

And we know how this story ends. Some of us will be travelling to see the Temple site next year and marvel at its size and mourn the loss of what used to be. However, we will not mourn the loss of worship because after telling his disciples that the Temple would be destroyed he gives us the most reassuring news we can ever hear. In the Gospel of John we hear ""Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The temple, the earthly creation made of massive stones and carefully mixed mortar, cannot contain God forever, if even for a day. But what Jesus offered to his followers then and to us today is eternal – it is the temple that was raised in three days and that temple is his body. Each of us carries that temple within us, every

faithful Christian wherever they may be. Himself, freely offered and gratefully received is the centre of our worship. His body and blood, which we remember and commemorate each week in the Eucharist is the focus of our worship and the heart of our faith.

Not some piles of stones in Jerusalem. And not even this beautiful, even breathtaking Church. This building is not the centre of our worship but it is the place that we gather to worship Jesus – the Temple of his body and blood freely given and gratefully received.

It's the body of Jesus
that is our temple
The centre of our worship.

And for that, thanks be to God.