

*As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" 2Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."*

*3When 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?" 5Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 6Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 7When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. 8For 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 birthpangs.*

*9"As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. 10And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 13and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen

The leaves on the trees have most all come down. One day our world was painted in golds and reds and oranges, an overnight frost left all the colors on the ground.

It was a little shock to me. I knew it was coming.

I wonder how big a shock it was to the disciples to find out the temple would one day be like the leaves on the trees, fallen to the ground. All its beauty and majesty and glory broken up, destroyed.

Not one stone will be left upon another, Jesus said.

When? they asked Jesus.

The question they asked is the only question Jesus did not answer that day. When.

Instead Jesus talked of all sorts of other falling. Not just leaves but the trees themselves, all of life, falling down.

Listen: *"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 birthpangs."*

*They will hand you over to councils, you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings because of me.*

*Brother will betray brother to death. And a father his child. And children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

*The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

And we thought if we just followed Jesus life would be easier.

Jesus is talking to his chosen ones here: Peter, James, John and Andrew. They were the ones who left their possessions and their families and their livelihood to follow Jesus. Surely they would escape the suffering that would come on the world at the end! Surely they would escape from God's wrath being poured out!

But Jesus said no. The most select ones of all would be hated by all. They would be handed over, beaten. Had they left everything for this?

Sometimes God's ways are so very confusing. The crook lives to a ripe old age and the poor woman who trusts in Jesus is crushed by grief. The little people who trust in God are caught between the teeth of marching armies while the wealthy flee to refuge in South America.

And now Jesus is saying that even the temple of God will fall, and governments and families and nature itself will fall like the leaves once glorious then suddenly all on the ground. What can we count on?

Not heaven and earth. Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away.

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away."

What do you think? Is Jesus talking about the end? Well, maybe. But this very day the end of the world is happening to people just like us.

A phone call and suddenly you and I are in those last days.

An argument and the person who promised to love you for life is leaving.

First Iraq expels some inspectors and no one really knows where it all might lead.

Friends at church one moment praying for one another and the next moment shouting, no longer speaking.

Is Jesus talking of the end?

Or maybe this is all a sneak preview of his next days - one moment sharing an intimate meal with his closest friends - the next betrayed by one of them kissing him, the rest abandoning him. On trial before the religious leaders, beaten, mocked, then on trial before the government of Rome, nailed to the cross, the sun turning to darkness for three hours. Even God silent as Jesus cries from the cross.

Heaven and earth will pass away.

That is for sure.

There is not some way of believing in God that will protect you more than Jesus was protected. There is not some secret knowledge, not some special prayer, not some community of faith that can hold back the flood of sorrow and grief and death.

But the one who had that flood wash over him promises, "My words will not pass away."

His word will be spoken this day, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This word will not pass away.

The baptized one will belong to God, through life and death, through joy and sorrow, through order and chaos. When there is no one's hand to hold, no shelter from the storm, no family to depend on, Jesus promises that this baptized one will still be his.

Easter - the day of being raised from the dead - truly this is all that God gives you.

In a passing away world, this is all you have.

It is enough.

For in every day that comes, God's word will be enough.