

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn:

Reading: Mark 11:3-18

Prayers: Beryl, Derry, Audrey, Mrs. Wilkinson (Branksome), Mrs. Topping, Peter and Anne Marie (mother v. ill); Evelyn, Marion, Gerry, Andrew, Elizabeth, Judith, Joyce, Jean, Cynthia

Caroline and I went on a tour led by a very pretty Israeli archaeologist around the walls behind which was the base of the Temple.

The walls are not the walls of the Temple itself but only holding back the earth on top of which Herod began to build the third Temple in 20 BC.

It was a fascinating tour.

We could see the places where pilgrims would have washed before they climbed the steps into the Temple area itself.

We could see where there had once been a gate into the Temple area, long ago closed off.

And there were the massive stones, weighing as much as a London Routemaster bus!

They must have been hauled into place in very much the same way as the stones with which the pyramids were constructed using earth ramps, logs to roll the stones over, and vast numbers of labourers!

Seasoned travellers were impressed greatly by the Temple in Jerusalem.

If the surrounding walls of the Temple mount were impressive the Temple itself was constructed with great stones and the sun shone from its marble cladding.

It was like St. Peter's in Rome, magnificent and unforgettable.

Yet, Jesus prophesies:

“Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

One of intriguing questions discussed by New Testament scholars is whether Mark's Gospel was written just before or just after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in AD 70.

Whichever, it seems that Jesus did indeed prophesy its destruction perhaps because he recognised that in a country where so many were in rebellious mood the Romans were bound to destroy the great symbol of God's presence with the people of Israel.

But this was also a dangerous thing to say.

It seemed like disloyalty both to God and to his own people.

The belief that God would neither save the place
where Jewish people gathered to worship nor save his people
sounded like treason to those with power!

The disciples ask when all this will happen.
Jesus answers another question
and declares that before God brings this age to an end
there will be natural disasters,
people falsely claiming to come in the name of God,
troubles and wars of many kinds.
Looking back over 2,000 years we see how true that is.

Yesterday, two of the great Wall Street investment banks,
Goldman Sacks and Morgan Stanley,
became ordinary banks accepting deposits from ordinary customers.
They need the additional help the America Treasury
will give them if they are no longer solely Investment Banks.
In a couple of weeks all the old Investment Banks of Walls Street,
banks which seemed to rule the world of finance,
have ceased to be.....
Changing times.....

We go into an uncertain future
just as Jesus told his disciples that it would continue to be.
Yet, he left with his disciples a way of facing
the troubles and difficulties that were bound to come to them
as they lived in this world and sought to be faithful to God.
When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God
he was opening up the possibility of changing the world
so that it reflected more and more
the way God wants us to live together.
When the old world crumbles we can do one of two things.
1. We can try and hold it together
and sometimes that seems the right thing to do.
2. Or, learning from the mistakes of the past
we can seek to create that which more faithfully reflects
what we believe God wants for the future.

The crisis is the banking system
gives us the opportunity to ask some very fundamental questions
about the way we use our resources in this world.
We do so at a time when our oil supplies are running out,
when the world is overheating because of our consumption of fossil fuels
and the gasses which being emitted.
What I would like to hear from all our political leaders
is a vision of how we create a more just and sustainable future
and how we will manage the changes which will inevitably
be necessary if we aren't just to continue in our old destructive ways.

And we remember the promise of Jesus,
"In everything that happens, I am with you!" Amen.