

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn:

Reading: Mark 13.14-23

Prayers

I almost gave these verses a miss
thinking we could do without so much gloom on a Tuesday morning.
Then I read the headlines in this morning's newspaper
about the largest ever recorded one day crash in the Stock Market
and thought that we shouldn't ignore these difficult sayings.

Chapter 13 of Mark reminds us of the book of Daniel.
Like Daniel, it's about the troubles that face the people of Judea

- about the profaning of the Temple
- and about the coming "end" of this age.

One of the big issues in trying to understand this passage
is whether Mark was writing before or after
the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70.

The Jewish people remembered with horror how
the Greek invader, Antiochus Epiphanes,
set us an alter to Zeus in the Temple at Jerusalem in 168 BC.
In AD 40 the Roman Emperor, Caligula, threatened
to place a statue of himself in the Temple,
though he never did it.

If Mark was writing before AD 70 and the destruction of the Temple
he may have been thinking of something like this....

If he wrote afterwards, he probably felt that the destruction of the Temple
was itself the ultimate act of impiety!

The destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem as a city
also resulted in the population fleeing in all directions
and it was the end of Jerusalem as a great Jewish city.
From then on it was to be a very different place.....

It may be that we are standing at a moment in our history
when we face some of the greatest challenges of all time.
In the next few weeks, months and years
we will make the decisions which will determine
the kind of world that our children and grandchildren will inhabit.
One of the challenges will be to recognise who are the true prophets
and who are the false prophets.
Who speaks the words which offer us a way
through the financial, political and environmental crises
which face the world.
Who will give us the courage to change the way we live together
and take those frightening steps in a new direction

which will ultimately give birth to new hope for our world?

Our passage finished with the words, "Be alert!"
This is no time for just sitting back
in the hope that everything will work out alright in the end.
Every Christian has to seek to hear and understand
what God is saying to us and what God is doing
in the midst of all the conflicting words and actions of our world.

Yet, even in the difficult times about which Mark writes
there is the promise that God is with us
and that our times of trouble will not last for ever.
Mark says to us through Jesus
that as human beings we have to be alert
and responsive to what God is wanting of us in these challenging times.
Yet, at the same time, God is with us,
and, one way or another, difficulty and trouble will not last for ever.
The end, whatever that may be like and whenever it will come
will be a transformation of life
for those who are caught up in the good and loving purposes of God.

Our communion today, is both

- a recognition of the presence of God in Christ
who is with us now
- and an opening of ourselves to the wisdom of Christ
as we face the challenges that lie before us
and respond to them as we believe he wants us to do.

Even in difficult and uncertain times, we are not alone
and all is not lost! Amen