

Sermon – Luke 21:5-19
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Grace Lutheran Church
23 Pentecost – Year C
16 November 2025

“All Fall Down”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. There were all kinds of things I was going to say today. I mean, what's better than having Stewardship Sunday fall on same day as Jesus' "little apocalypse" as he reminds us that everything – even all of this – will one day fall apart? There was probably going to be a joke about Jesus' promise that we wouldn't lose our hair. I was going to tie in our strategic planning process, thinking about how God is calling us to be faithful – not to prop up the church today but because God is calling us into vibrant mission and ministry in all the days to come. By the end of the week, Jesus' words about being arrested and persecuted for his name's sake had taken on new meaning, and I'm sure I would have spoken about all that unfolded at the Broadview ICE facility as pastors and other faith leaders sought simply to minister to those detained. It is always on my mind when I read these texts that, whatever future Jesus is speaking of, he is always describing our present, so full of violence and injustice and persecution. It seems that things are always falling apart, that the world is always ending.
2. But before that sermon could be written, things fell apart. The world crashed down around us. There is more than enough grief to go around. Our hearts ache for the Rohlfing and Marchi families as they mourn for Dorothy. We grieve with Karen and the Grace Choir and all who loved John. We carry other losses in our hearts today. But nothing could have prepared our

community for Wednesday, when death took Peter from us. It is impossibly cruel that, at the age of nineteen, with life stretching out in front of him, Peter is gone from this world. I cannot wrap my head or my heart around why this happened. Words are hard to find. We stand with Esther and Neal and Sammy in the midst of the unimaginable. Today, as they travel home from North Carolina, we gather to cry and weep, to hold one another close, to share memories of this sweet boy, this amazing young man. We gather around this table, as Jesus gives himself to us. And we gather around tables in the Fellowship Hall, giving ourselves to each other. We even make our faith promises, not because anyone is thinking about finances today, but because we, as God's people, promise to be faithful to one another. Even and especially in the face of death. Because when everything falls apart, God draws us closer together.

3. I am so sorry, and I am so sad. But I am also certain that because Jesus lives, we also shall live. Neither life nor death nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing. Death is a thief, but it is also a liar. Try as it might, death does not get the last word. Death cannot undo God's promises to Peter, who remains a beautiful, beloved child of God. And while we desperately wish he were still here, we trust the mystery that he is free, alive in the light of God. That while his death is not part of God's plan, neither can it undo God's plans or the change the end of the story. That while things fall apart, the end of the world is not the end, for God is making all things new. Not a stone may be left on stone, but God's love for you will not be undone.
4. There is no unbreaking of our hearts today. Our tears are holy. Our embraces are signs of grace. We lament and mourn and weep, trusting that God hears the cries of the brokenhearted, that God's heart breaks with ours. May we not grow weary of doing what is right and caring for one another. May we be the church for Esther, Neal, and Sammy – signs for them and for one another of

God's reign in the midst of this broken world, signs of the new world that will one day dawn. Until then, dear Peter, with all the saints, rest well. We love you. I am so very sad. But I refuse to be hopeless. Christ who was crucified has been raised. The end is not the end. Jesus has won, and death itself is dead. May we hold on to that promise, and to one another, knowing that God is holding on to us. Alleluia. Alleluia. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.