

Text: Mark 13:1-12

Theme: Distractions

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

My Dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark the thirteenth chapter verses one through twelve.

Boys and Girls how are you doing today? I pray that you continue to remember that you are blessed in Christ as we learned last week. *Look off into distance* Sorry, where were we? I got distracted. Have you ever gotten distracted? Maybe you saw a shiny new toy, or a person wearing fancy odd clothing passed by while your mom or dad was saying something important to do. Maybe you really wanted to play outside and were daydreaming about being outside while your teacher was teaching math or English. It is very easy for us to get distracted, especially by shiny items as they catch our attention as they flash and gleam or there are things that we really want to do instead of what we are doing. In our text for today, we see the disciples getting distracted by the Temple. How does Jesus deal with their distraction? How does Jesus help us deal with our distractions today? Ponder these questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Distractions in Troubled Times (JC day, Present, Future)

In our text for today, we see the disciples get distracted. They are distracted by all of the glory around the Temple. They took pride in Temple building, especially during troubled times and occupation by foreign enemies. Rightly so, the ancient Jewish Historian Josephus writes that the stones that make up the temple were massive. They were fifty feet long, twenty-four broad and sixteen in thickness. The buildings themselves towered over the court of the Gentiles by one hundred eighty feet. Even more there was a lot of glitter and gold. As Josephus writes again, “The holy temple.... was covered with gold, and through it the first edifice was visible to a spectator without in all its grandeur and the surroundings of the inner gate all gleaming with gold fell beneath his eye... It had, moreover, above it those *golden vines, from which depended grape clusters as tall as a man...*”

Yet as grand as the Temple is, it is still just a building made by human hands. Jesus predicts that it will be destroyed. Indeed, it is in 70 AD by the Romans, only four (4) years after it's finally finished! Jesus uses the destruction of the Temple to discuss the troubles that happen in the time before the end of the world. Wars, famines, earthquakes, family conflicts, physical pain, torment, and strife. Our Lord does this so that the disciples, and us, would not get distracted by them but endure unto the end.

Yet, how often do we get distracted in the midst of our troubles? Maybe you have gone down the YouTube rabbit hole when you should be working and getting things accomplished. Maybe your children distracted you when you were trying to get

housework done. We get distracted by many things in this life. We distract ourselves because we do not want to deal with the pain and troubles of this life. We know that we have troubles. Those facts are evident in our text for today as well as in our own lives. In the midst of pain, fear, terror, and hardships, we often get distracted and go astray after glitter of false doctrine. We look around and see all of the terrors around us. In our fear, we go astray to things that sound good and great, and wonderful, but in actuality cannot save or help us at all, much like the disciples placing their hope in stone and glittering gold. False doctrine such as the Prosperity Gospel, putting our trust in our riches, putting our trust in people or things in order to save us and make our lives better. Thereby falsely thinking that since our physical lives are good, then we are safe.

Yet, in actuality, we do not need to get distracted when troubles arise, no matter how harshly they may come upon us. Rather instead, we need to focus all the more on what Jesus has done for us, and has given to us through His death and Resurrection. Pain, hardships, wars, famine, earthquakes, who is ultimately in control of all of these? Jesus Christ Himself is telling us of the tribulations to come. As God Almighty, He knows and controls the extent of these calamities. He knows the troubles that befall us and He has promised that those who endure to the end will be saved. Although the earthly temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, Christ was not destroyed when the temple of his body was crucified and died for us men and for our salvation by taking all of our sin, pain, and punishment on the cross. Jesus took the worst of all of our calamities for us that

we may have relief from them. Rising again from the dead, His body did not see decay or destruction. Jesus is the true temple, the source, and cause, of our reconciliation with God forever by His death and resurrection from the dead.

Being reconciled to God, we know that, as Saint Peter writes, we too are being built into his temple not made with hands—the church. We who have died and risen with Christ by the waters of Holy Baptism will rise again to be with him eternally in heaven when He comes again, raises all the dead, and judges the living and the dead. Until that day, we have the privilege of testifying through the Holy Spirit to the truth of this gospel and this kingdom. We proclaim the wonders of what Jesus has done, and continues, to do for us and the world. We do so, knowing full well what may happen to us. In the midst of our trials and hardships, we hold to the faith that we have been granted. In hope, we hold to Jesus' death and resurrection and the comfort that we have, no matter the turmoil that we see in the world around us.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.