

Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!

That's what one of Jesus' disciples says to him as they look up at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!

Look! How big, how colossal, how strong, how indestructible! 'Look at our Temple, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!'

They were looking at the Second Temple in Jerusalem, rebuilt by Herod the Great. According to Josephus, a Jewish historian in the 1st century, this Temple was an architectural masterpiece. It was MASSIVE, meant to inspire AWE! To compare, imagine a monumental pyramid in Egypt, 13 acres at its base. The Temple was three times that size! Picture the Athenian Acropolis in Greece that houses the Parthenon. The Temple in Jerusalem was four times bigger! Its rooms covered 36 acres, and it stood 20 stories tall! So much gold covered the outside of the building that it is said that those who looked at the Temple in sunlight would be blinded by its dazzling brightness. The retaining walls were made from enormous stones that were each 40 feet long.

Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!

Jesus says back to the disciple – “Do **you** see these great buildings?”

Do you see?

In a brilliant essay by a writer named Debie Thomas, she raises this question, “Why is it that Jesus asks the disciple if HE can see what the disciple has just invited Jesus to see?”

Do you see what I see?

Aren't the two of them, standing right IN the Temple, seeing the same thing? Apparently not. Not at all.

Do you see what I see? That's our question for today.

Jesus' disciple sees something strong and permanent, and he marvels at it with a sense of pride and security. Jesus sees something fragile, something that will pass away, something that - however majestic and built with great devotion - cannot hold all that God is or represent all that God is. Nothing can. Nothing ever will. And nothing – even the things that we work for and put our hearts and sweat into - lasts forever. Nothing can. Nothing ever will.

But perhaps what's even more crucial in this story is that Jesus sees something WITHIN the Temple that is far more important than the Temple itself.

Remember in the Gospel from last week, Jesus SEES a poor widow. He SEES her approach and drop into the treasury her two copper coins. Next to the gifts of wealthy scribes and the lawyers, her coins seem meager. But Jesus says to his disciples, 'Do you SEE? Do you really SEE that woman – that widow there? She has put in MORE than ALL the others combined.

Do you see what I see?

Just moments later, the disciple asks: *Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!* And to that, Jesus responds, *'not one of these stones will be left here upon another. It will all be thrown down.'* In that puzzling statement, Jesus is inviting us to reconsider what we think we know, to open our minds to something unexpected, to break everything open, start over, to see a new reality, to SEE – *with God's help* – what Jesus sees.

Do you see what I see?

This section of Mark's Gospel is sometimes called 'the little apocalypse.' Now, when we hear the word apocalypse, we often think of Terror. Destruction. *War of the Worlds*, *The Left Behind Series*, *Mad Max*, *Avengers: Infinity Wars*. End times. Things crumbling. Falling apart.

When read in this context – Jesus words *'not one of these stones will be left here upon another. It will all be thrown down'* sound terrifying! But the word *apocalypse* is not really meant to terrify. The word literally means 'unveiling' 'revealing' (revelation) 'SEE-ING!' –And (more specifically) seeing what has been there all along that you haven't seen before – a deeper REALITY that you haven't been able to see before.

Do you see what I see?

THIS is the kind of apocalypse that Jesus is talking about: The REAL apocalypse (revelation) here is that a seemingly meager gift offered by a poor widow are more pleasing, significant, and enduring than the seemingly indestructible Temple built by a mighty Ruler.

Do you see what I see?

The other night, Mark and I watched “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” a documentary film about Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers (and characters like Officer Clemmons, Lady Aberlin, King Friday and Daniel the Striped Tiger) that many of us grew up watching.

Lots of people thought Mr. Rogers was ‘out-of-touch,’ and he’s been parodied and ridiculed for his nerdy sweaters and sneakers, and for a gentle temperament that many thought was just too soft, too square, too sensitive. But his friends and family explained that it was Fred Rogers’ being horribly bullied and misunderstood as a child that gave him a unique ability to empathize, to connect, to really see the part of **every** child that was otherwise dismissed or rejected.

At one point in the film, Mark and I found ourselves crying— I mean ‘we can’t look at each other, or we’ll start sobbing’ kind of tears. We had to pause the film until we wiped our eyes and took a deep breath before starting again. We had to ask ourselves – ‘what’s the deal with him? How did he touch us in this way? He’s not doing anything spectacular, he just says simple quiet things, and then waits and listens to the children.’

It’s just so simple

And apocalyptic. Revealing. Unveiling. He just does the simple loving quiet things any of us **can** do - but didn’t see before.

Mr. Rogers once said on screen to the children, “You know, . . . the most important things are INVISIBLE”.

(That’s a paraphrase of his favorite quote, one that hung in a frame on Fred Rogers wall by the author of “The Little Prince” It says, “Only the HEART can see rightly; what is ESSENTIAL is invisible to the eyes).” This is so important to remember in times such as these.

I think we feel overwhelmed, so exhausted, numb to the point of indifference, defensive, and depressed by things that seem so out of our control, so relentless and despairing and broken in our world –

- wild fires raging
- gun violence in our streets and schools, and places of worship
- divisiveness
- wars

And when people – either individually or collectively – are depressed and fearful – what do we do? We tend to isolate, to separate ourselves, to defend what we fear losing, what we worked hard to build. Because we long to feel a sense of power and control.

‘Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!’

Look! How colossal, how strong, how indestructible we are!

But in the very next breath, Jesus (anticipating his own death) gives us a different way to LIVE. He tells us what to DO when the stones do come tumbling, when the world does turn upside down, and when we feel lost and afraid.

He says (look at the scripture) “*Do not be alarmed.*” “*Beware that no one leads you astray.*” In other words, don’t give into the despair. Don’t allow yourself to thrive on the division and contempt that will be so easy to cultivate. Don’t participate in it. Just don’t (good advice to remember this week as we head into Thanksgiving and meet with family and friends we don’t always agree with).

Make peace, he says. Stay the course – BECAUSE something new is coming. “This is but the beginning of the birthpangs,” Jesus says. God is always making something new.

Do you see what I see? Jesus asks us as he points to the stones.

And then reminds us that the things that can only be seen with the heart – acts of kindness, mercy, compassion, love – these are finally the **only** things that last, the only things that can heal what is broken, the only things that matter. Little apocalypses. Simple loving quiet things. Unveiling the truth. Revealing the way forward. Transforming our hearts. Making us new. **Amen.**