

Making the Road: *Walking through Lent*

WEEK 5: WALKING WITH HOPE

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Sunday, April 3 ☞ Luke 21:5-8

During the bleakest, most isolated times of the pandemic, I turned to dystopian novels for comfort. It feels absurd that these harrowing, sometimes horrific, stories made me feel better, but they gave me fresh perspective. “Well, it’s not this bad ... yet,” I would think. And I began to recognize not just all we had lost, but all that remained.

The characters of dystopian novels are always traveling, in search of food, a warmer climate, a safer shelter, other civilized humans to join for group survival. In Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, a father and son journey on foot after some undisclosed cataclysm. Ash fills the air of this ruined world and the only survivors have turned savage. Pushing their meager supplies in a shopping cart, a motorcycle mirror fixed to the handle to keep watch for marauders from behind, they travel to survive in a cold, colorless world.

The only beauty along McCarthy’s road is the devotion of this father for his son. Their tender intimacy stands in stark contrast to the evil surrounding them and the savagery to which others have turned. Along their journey, the father reminds his son of their purpose, the calling to which they must cling. “My job is to take care of you,” he says. “I was appointed by God to do that ... we are the good guys.”

Chapter 21 of Luke’s Gospel introduces Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse, foretelling the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the second coming of the Son of Man. Jesus warns his disciples not to be led astray during the frightening times that lie ahead, not to be deceived by false prophets or led to believe good people can do nothing or no hope is to be found. No matter how rough the road gets, we are to hold on to what is good and turn to God’s promise of deliverance. The road we walk through Lent may feel dystopian. But we walk with hope.

God, help us to have courage, to do good and to hold on to your hope. Amen.

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Monday, April 4 ☞ Luke 21:9-11

Remember when we were afraid of our groceries? At the beginning of the pandemic I sat on my kitchen floor, laboriously Clorox-wiping every box, bag, and can. I was terrified of the dangerous virus that we then knew so little about. The Greek word for “terrified” in this passage can also translate as “startled.” Jesus does not want us surprised or shaken by terrifying happenings. Great conflicts will arise. Natural disasters will disrupt and destroy. Famines and plagues will haunt us. But as we experience these terrible plot points, God’s narrative still unfolds. God’s promise is on the horizon, soon to be revealed. Keep walking this road. There is hope.

Holy God, when we are startled by terrifying events, ground us, once again, in your narrative of hope. Amen.

Tuesday, April 5 ☞ Luke 21:12-19

These days of pandemic fear, anguish, frustration and despair present Christian disciples with an opportunity to testify, to make Jesus’ way known through the evidence of our own words and behavior. We can embody a way that counters selfish individualism, obstinate, hunkered-down division, efforts to control, overpower, and oppress. We can speak and act from our Christian ethic of love, responding to others with respect, radical openness, curiosity, and humility. Does this feel daunting? Do not fear. Jesus promises to give us the words and the wisdom. We just need to embrace the opportunity.

God, you present us with challenges and opportunities. Help us embrace the spiritual resources you offer us to testify to your way of love. Amen.

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Wednesday, April 6 ☞ Luke 21:20-28

Have you ever considered a posture for hope? Aligning your body to better receive what Jesus offers? A yoga teacher taught me the benefit of mountain pose with a clarifying example. She stood “normally”: slouched, her weight unbalanced. She asked a student to press down on her shoulders. Our class watched as her body crumpled under the slightest pressure of the student’s hand. Then she stood tall, feet balanced, shoulders squared, chin raised, and the student applied pressure again. This time, our teacher stood strong. Friends, stand up and raise your heads, because our redemption is drawing near.

Jesus, you are our strength within and without. In the midst of destruction and despair, help us to stand tall in a posture of hope. Amen.

Thursday, April 7 ☞ Luke 21:29-33

If you Google “images of fig trees” you will be delighted by pictures of thick, twisty trunks lush with green, three-lobed leaves. Fig trees grow well in Israel because they love dry, sunny locations with porous soil. Their fruit is extravagant – green bulbs that ripen purple and break open to sweet, crunchy, reddish flesh – a desert luxury. It’s no wonder the fig tree is the biblical metaphor for the peace and prosperity of Israel, a sign of God’s kingdom to come. God is good — as good as a sturdy tree bearing luscious fruit for all in a dry, desert climate.

God, you sustain us and feed us in a myriad of ways as we make this road. Thank you for your beautiful fruit. Amen.

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Friday, April 8 ☞ Luke 21:34-36

We are to travel light as we walk with Jesus, shedding distractions, worries, and habits that drag us down, leaving us far from our best selves. Are we caring for our minds and bodies as we should? Are we mindful of how we spend our energy and resources? Are our lives bloated and burdened with hoarded goods? We are making this road to stand before the Son of Man. What must we shed this Lent to stay faithful and alert on this journey?

Savior, liberate us from the trappings of this world, our idols of food and drink, the things we buy and hoard for our comfort, not our need. We are burdened by too much. Help us lighten our load this Lent. Amen.

Saturday, April 9 ☞ Luke 21:37-38

Biblical forecasts of destruction are intended to call God's people back to their faith. What future devastation could we avoid by listening to Jesus? Jesus' teachings in the Temple have been passed on through oral and written accounts. The road we make today builds upon the lessons we have learned, collectively, as a people of faith. We learn from those times we strayed from the path. This Lent, we repent and return to Christ who guides us. We make this road inspired by the steadfast love of God for humankind in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God of hope, you've called us back to our faith. We repent and return to the way, ready to follow your son into and through this holy week. Amen.