

When a pilot says, “fasten your seat belts, we are in for a rough ride,” how does one’s stomach feel? What went through the minds of those chased from homes by wild fires in California? And after terrifying moments of fear or panic, or loss, especially when the realization hits that lives will never be the same, what then? How do we handle the rough rides that too often accompany life?

Our text describes the scene when Jesus’ disciples finally arrived in Jerusalem, unaware of the “holy week” that lay before them. As they took in the sights, they were awestruck by the beauty of the massive marble stones on which the temple was built. Left speechless by such an incredible sight, imagine their disbelief when Jesus remarked, “it won’t be long, and they will all be knocked down!”

That would be the equivalent of our entering Washington DC and having someone predict that the Washington monument, Lincoln Memorial, and Capital would all soon be destroyed. They couldn’t begin to know how to react.

In similar moments, it is tempting to cry out, “*The sky is falling!*” Or, “*It can’t get worse than this!*” When Jerusalem WAS destroyed a few decades later they would learn what Jesus meant and they would cry out in despair and grief – much as we have when our hopes and dreams are threatened with destruction.

But Jesus had bigger fish to fry. He knew that the *temple of his body* was about to be destroyed, and that would be a rougher ride than anyone could image. **The destruction of Jerusalem, or any earthly structure, hope, or dream is nothing compared to the sacrifice that Jesus was preparing to face.** [pause]

It was precisely because of our rough rides and difficult moments that Jesus strapped himself in for a journey he didn’t deserve. His mission was to allow destruction to come, that he might become a perfect sacrifice for a world and lives that are broken and full of decay. And his physical destruction became our eternal victory and hope! His journey ensured ours would become smoother!

The reality of life is “what we build with human hands will always fall down.” The bigger the build, the greater the fall. When things break and fall apart, we respond with confusion, doubt and fear. Sin means life will often be turbulent and danger might lurk around the next turn. But that ride isn’t the end.

The good news is that Jesus accomplished what we cannot. The earthly destruction that inevitably affects all of us will only be a momentary affliction on a journey that will bring us into the joy of that Easter gift of light and life.

“He is Risen!” announced that for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in life or in death we are never alone, and God’s love will never leave us! Despite

our falls, we are lifted. Despite our guilt, we are forgiven. Despite our fears, we are given a promise and a sure hope.

Jesus prepared his disciples for the rough ride they would face (not only in his passion) but after he left them to carry on his earthly mission. For even though the cure had been found, the disease of this earthly life would continue to rage.

Jesus said, "Each such moment is *"but the beginning of the pangs of birth."* Only through earthly loss and eventual death will we arrive at our true destination and our eternal home. Difficult as the ride might be, Jesus changes our destination and the dazzling joy of eternal peace in the presence of God becomes a gift called faith that allows us to proceed.

Throughout ministry I have been surrounded by people who have had "rough rides" and yet other than their family and closest friends, would not have a clue of such pain, because faith allowed and empowered each of them to journey safely through such journeys. For when we know our ultimate destination, and are assured we will arrive safely home, we find that we are able to endure such moments, no matter how rough or difficult it might become.

The real problem is not fear the future but our temptation to live as if the future is not in God's hands at all. It is more important to know that God is near, and the destination is secure, than how or when the predicament will end.

Here is the point: Good Friday is the only way to get to Easter! It is in suffering that we are reminded of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. It is only those who walk through darkness who can appreciate the joy of light!

Only a mother understands the incredibly traumatic ride of childbirth. If there is ever a rough ride, that is it. How incredibly painful are those birth pangs, but what joy comes with the first breath of life! And only a Savior who would enter every painful moment of our life can become our peace.

Our faith is all about Jesus who endured a rough ride to make our lives full of promise and hope. As a man, he embraced the storms, incredible pain, and even death of a broken world to assure us that as God, he would conquer what we fear and be with us every single step of the way.

Such is the love of God for you and for me!

Jesus used an earthly future to impress upon his disciples that no matter what surprises and difficulties came their way (whether the loss of a temple or the crucifixion of their Messiah) he would lead them safely home. And so, it is for us. No matter how rough the ride, the destination is assured.

That is our promise and that is our peace.

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