

Zechariah 14:4-5, Matthew 24:1-8

“The (re)birth of God’s people”

The sermon title for this morning is the birth, or the rebirth of God’s people. On Wednesday evening, October 15, 2025 at around 8pm my mom was reborn a perfect creature and inhabited the kingdom of God face to face with her Savior whom she loved unconditionally because He first loved her. For those of you who want to know the series of events, she went in on Monday morning for a simple hernia repair, that became less simple and so surgery was necessary which led to a nicked bowel and so a resection had to take place. She texted us Monday evening saying they were keeping her for the evening and hoped to be home in the morning.

I got a phone call Tuesday morning from my Aunt Betty that she wasn’t doing well. I flew out there and I was with her Tuesday evening at 9:30pm, one brother in Arizona at the funeral of his wife’s father, and another brother at a conference in Prague. I walked in her hospital room and she looked at me and said: Thank you Jesus, the relief on her face and her body was evident. She fell sound asleep around midnight so I went home to get some sleep before getting there early on Wednesday.

Wednesday was a very difficult day, with at one point her telling me and the doctors she was ready to see Jesus. I went to get dinner and get her paperwork because things weren’t going well and the nurses said that literally as soon as I left the room she passed, and they had the brother’s number in Prague only so I walked into her room after getting her papers to an incredibly peaceful looking mother without any IV’s, or oxygen nose thingy’s, almost as if she had a smile on her face. I scolded her for choosing to go when I wasn’t there, while realizing that was her choice. My mom has already experienced the joy and the rapture of Jesus’ second coming about which we have always wondered.

People of faith and especially followers of Jesus have always been curious about His second coming. Two main questions have been front and center and those questions are: When will it come and what are we supposed to be doing before it comes? Both of our Scriptures today speak about the second coming of the Messiah whom we understand to be Jesus our Savior, and when that will happen it will be a rebirth of God’s people. Let’s read.

READ

We have turned the page and we are now in Matthew 24 and if you remember back in Matthew 21 Jesus had entered the temple a day or more after Palm Sunday and all of these

chapters, and teachings, and healings have supposedly taken place on this one single day. Jesus is exhausted, he has done so much and has been so emotional in calling out one group after another for their betrayal of God. We just came off all the Woe's, which were preceded by other castigations against other religious leaders, now it is time to leave.

So Jesus and his disciples are casually leaving the temple and one of the disciples makes an offhanded remark like: Holy Cow, check out these rocks, pointing out one of the wonders of the world in the building of the temple. So, you need to know that for 80 years the Temple was being rebuilt and was pretty much all that Jesus and his disciples knew, the temple under construction. From 20 years before Jesus' birth to about 30 years after Jesus' death, the temple was being torn down and rebuilt.

So maybe that day a new set of designer rocks had come in to be added to the Temple Wall or to be added to a column, who knows, but what we do know is that one of the disciples noticed it and pointed it out to Jesus and the other disciples. Jesus seems to look at it casually and say in the same tone, not one stone will be left on another, it will all be torn down. Jesus was tired, the disciples didn't respond, maybe he was just ready to get to the Bethany, on the Mt. of Olives and put his feet up, so no one says anything, until they leave the temple, go into the busy streets of Jerusalem, descend into the valley, make their way up the steep hill to the Mt. of Olives and there we see in vs.3 that Jesus is sitting down when his disciples come to him.

This scene is significant because it brings us back to our reading in Zecharia which tells us of the coming of the Messiah whose feet will stand firm on the Mt. of Olives, and while we see the picture of Jesus sitting here, it is his presence once again on the Mt. of Olives at the end of his life that brings us to a realization that he is fulfilling, once again, the Scripture that was written of old about him being the Messiah and the Savior of the world.

His disciples approach him now and say, so, Jesus, remember when you said that the temple is going to be torn down, we know that when the temple is torn down then the Messiah will come again, and you are the Messiah, can you fill us in on when exactly that is going to happen. Remember, one of the primary things that followers of Jesus want to know, when is this going to happen. For some reason we tend to forget the words of Jesus when he says it is not for us to know the times or the seasons, we still want to know and we still want to predict when Jesus will come back again.

But Jesus patiently responds to his disciple, he is, after, in the last few days of his life. He answers them by first warning them to not be led astray. I need to say that this is a concern for me as well as I know that we span a very, very large breadth of beliefs and thoughts and there are so many out there today who would lead us down a road that may seem innocuous, but does inevitably lead away from the teachings of Christ. We are facing the pain of things being torn down as Jesus mentions in regards to the temple.

Each one of us is facing something either torn from us or that is being torn away in our civic society and maybe even in our church. At a personal level many of us find ourselves mourning the loss of a significant member of our family, of our very heart. Where do we go from here? Many of us are facing medical realities that have never entered our mind that they existed, or at least maybe with other people, but not us. We see in our civic society what we consider freedoms and actions that defy Christian ethics taking place that we consider a taking away, a turning of one stone upon another, turning things upside down and we are left bewildered not just personally but also politically and religiously. Those things that we have considered bedrock and not able to be turned upside down, are now being turned upside down.

It is in this context that Jesus tells his disciples, do not be led astray. People will come from all over the place, people will be posting online, and on Facebook, and Instagram and Tick tock and will be flooding you with news networks that provide the truth, do not be led astray. We are in that time right now people, as the disciples were, where there are wars and rumors of war. That we see nation vs. nation, kingdom vs. kingdom, famines and earthquakes all over the world. We are in these times that Matthew describes.

But what so many people who claim to love Jesus get wrong is that they understand that this is the end time. No, Jesus says these are just the birth pains. This is just the beginning. Don't be led astray, don't let people tell you that now we can veer away from Jesus teaching of loving our neighbor, or welcoming the stranger, or feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked or providing showers and shelter to the homeless. Don't let anyone tell you that we can skip over these things because we in the times when Jesus is coming back. We are one day closer, but these are just the birth pains.

This weekend a group of Presbyterians from Florida, to Pennsylvania, to Washington State, to Mexico and everywhere in between gathered for the first every meeting with the Eastern European Partnership Network and the Southern European Partnership Network to talk about

strategy for the Presbyterian and Mission moving forward. Our denomination is in a time when the stones have been tossed about one on top of another and we aren't satisfied in standing around waiting for someone to rebuild what we feel need to be done now, which is mission across the world with missionaries doing the work, even if as we have seen in this church we are the missionaries.

The image was used that we are in the birth pangs of something new coming out of it. When something new comes out there is pain, the birth pains, and there is confusion, and a lot of times there is blood on the floor of people and institutions that we love and that we don't want to let go. And in this process something is birthed that at the end of the day we have no control of their trajectory. We can hope and pray for their future, but their future is theirs.

In vs.6 you will find the key to all of these verses that try to answer the question of the rebirth of the people of God, when will it happen and what are we to do as it happens. Vs 6 says that these things must take place. The wars the rumors of wars. We don't know when Jesus is coming back, that is the answer to when is it going to happen, we don't know. But what are we to do in the meantime? Vs. 6 is also the answer. These things must take place reveals to us the force and omnipresence of God's sovereignty.

Why must these things take place? These are not nice things. We can easily identify in our life, and especially in this time in our lives as things seem really upside down, and I don't just mean from a perspective of politics or religion, but also our own individual lives. You are all going through some really difficult times in your own families right now, I know you are. It feels like the temple is being torn down.

Jesus tells us, these things must take place. These things that may for a moment look out of control are nevertheless within God's purposes and providence. This is so much of what makes us Presbyterians, trusting in the Providence and the goodness of God. We are being reborn, right now, this very minute, through the blood of the lamb. Don't be led astray with anyone who might have a quick and easy fix or anyone who wants to tell you that Christians don't suffer. The suffering of our Savior provided the avenue to redemption. Our road while not that of our Savior, allows us to lean upon God's purposes and providence. Amen.