



Wednesday Prayer

23rd Sunday after Pentecost – Discerning beauty and relationship

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

Luke 21:5-6

The temple was an ornate, expensive, beautiful place that had been dedicated to God and the people were in great admiration of its magnificence. This past Sunday I attended the National Lutheran Choir concert in a very beautiful sanctuary with an impressive pipe organ that had us in admiration of both the choral and the organ’s magnificence. But before walking into that awesome space, I noticed a bench just outside the doors to the building with a hooded statue lying across it. To me, this statue is placed there as a symbol of the homeless Jesus, the wanderer and friend to the poor, outcast, marginalized. Making me think – what is my relationship to this person?

In this Gospel, Jesus doesn’t join in the praise of the temple’s beauty, but instead tells them it will be destroyed. Jesus further tells them that before that time, some will come pretending to be him so they should not be fooled. Everyone is not who they claim to be, and we should not be led astray. We share these messages with youth when we are working with them to stay safe in online and in-person relationships. My colleagues who work with youth experiencing homelessness or who have experienced exploitation understand well how they may have been manipulated and fooled in past relationships.

Thinking more about that statue outside of the church, I also wonder how often we misjudge the person we see lying on a park bench or the person walking with a hoodie pulled up over their head revealing little of their face. It’s hard to know what their story might be. The Gospel goes on to reveal great betrayal and hatred for those who follow the teachings of Jesus. It’s not easy to challenge the ways of mainstream society, but Jesus assures them that in the end “By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

God of compassion, you reveal yourself to us in ways we may not always see. Help us to discern those who may lead us astray from those who may be revealing your path toward a deeper relationship with you and with one another. Give us endurance for the journey. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director and team member of LSS Metro Homeless Youth Services.

If you would like to support youth experiencing homelessness this holiday season, helping them to feel recognized and loved, please join us in our Youth Holiday Gifts drive. Visit lssmn.org/youth/holidaygifts for more information and to sign up.