

# Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

## TWO ROADS DIVERGE

Luke 21:5-19

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28)

Analysis by Stephan K. Turnbull

5When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 6As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.

7They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" 8And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

9When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately. 10Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

12But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name.

13This will give you an opportunity to testify. 14So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; 15for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. 16You will be betrayed even by

parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17You will be hated by all because of my name. 18But not a hair of your head will perish. 19By your endurance you will gain your souls.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Bad Directions**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Choosing the Road Often Traveled***

It is not like Israel had not been warned before, by Jesus himself, or by the prophets before him. Whether they have been pinning their hopes on regional alliances, accommodation to imperial overlords, or the charisma of revolutionaries, would-be messiahs, the result is going to be the same. The stones might be pretty, but pretty soon that temple won't be looking so good. They should have followed Jesus instead. But then the Israel of God in the years A.D. seems to have contracted the same infatuation with worldly power, and we, even more, should know better. But who wants to follow Jesus on the road to Golgotha wielding the cross beam, when we could be wielding so much more social influence and power.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Seeking a Different Destination***

And let us not imagine that this is a difference of mere opinion or strategy—Jesus advocating one means to the Kingdom of God and we another. That would be foolish enough. But worse still, we have different aims, different hopes, different hearts. Jesus announces and inaugurates the Kingdom of God for the world, the restoration of God's justice, the renewal of God's creation. Meanwhile we are a lot more interested in augmenting our own kingdoms.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Hell-Bent to Get***

*There*

And so we go our own way. We travel the road of power and glory, willfully blind to the truth that the end of this road is destruction. The destruction of Jerusalem, foretold here by Jesus, and experienced in the decades that followed, only foreshadows the same for the people of God who continue to put their trust in and order their steps according to anyone but God's Christ.

## **PROGNOSIS: A New Way**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Opened Road***

Fortunately for us, the Kingdom of the Golgotha-bound has room for subjects who do not belong. Without these misfits, of course, it would be a pretty empty Kingdom. But before we would or could find our way into this Kingdom, or follow the way of the cross, Jesus died on a cross for us. And it is this act that opens the Kingdom road to the lost.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Destination Redefined***

As our hearts learn to trust the truth of this strange naturalization process, the Spirit also orients us to the equally strange direction of this Kingdom road, teaching us to see the greater beauty of God's Kingdom vision, and causing us to strain forward toward His destination.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Crossroad***

Finally the love affair with power and influence runs cold, and we begin, stumblingly, to order our steps according to a whole new set of course markers. Now our eyes are drawn to weakness, brokenness, suffering, and dying. Jesus is probably there, we have learned; and so we follow him, seizing the occasion to testify (v. 13).