

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What is the most magnificent building you have ever seen? Perhaps it was here in Australia, or maybe on an overseas trip. Do these beautiful buildings look like they could last forever? What about our buildings? How long do you think they will last, another 100 years, maybe 200 years? What are the oldest useable buildings in this town? We walk in and out of buildings daily, thinking they are permanent. They've been here for a long time and will be here for a long time to come. We expect to live a long time because we think this world is permanent, but it's foolish to think that we will be here forever.

You can witness this anywhere worldwide, whenever fighting or natural disasters have occurred. Buildings that we expect to be permanent aren't. If you have ever read about the bombing of Darwin, a whole town was destroyed in moments, a city that the residents thought was permanent. I saw it in Germany in the centre of the old city of Nurnberg—the church of Saint Lawrence. When you look at that building from the outside and then walk inside, you marvel at its size and its age. It seems like many of the other churches in Europe are very old, not just 100 years old but Hundreds of years old. It's as if it has been there forever. Saint Lawrence's was opened in 1477. But, when you investigate just a little more, you see the photo montage throughout the building, showing that this church was almost completely destroyed during the war. There was no roof, most of the walls were gone, and only a few pillars stood.

As the disciples were leaving the temple, they wanted to talk to Jesus about how magnificent and enduring it was. They thought that the beautiful

building would be there forever! But Jesus told them, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

This was really the third Temple built on the site: the first by Solomon, the second envisaged by Ezekiel and the third an extension of the second funded and directed by Herod only years before the time of Christ. That temple was destroyed in 70 AD. Jesus's prophecy was fairly short-lived, as in it was fulfilled very quickly, but his prophecy had further ramifications.

He wants his disciples, both the first 12 and all those that come after, to know that this world is temporary; it will come to an end. He doesn't want us to look at buildings that have stood for hundreds, maybe thousands of years and think that we have established ourselves on earth and we will live forever; he wants us to understand that this world will come to an end, as will the structures and organisations that we place our faith in, and this should change how we look at the world.

Of course, the inquisitive disciples want to know when things will happen and how they will know when to be ready. They say, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"

Jesus isn't interested in answering their questions; he wants them always to be prepared for his return, so he gives them information to help them stay prepared.

"Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray."

Jesus warns us that there will be false teachers and false prophets who will come and claim his name. He wants his disciples to be prepared and know how to tell the difference. Yet he warns that many will be led astray. This is why we confess our faith using the creeds that are very old. We continue to confess the same Jesus that has been confessed since he rose from the dead. We hold to this confession to be confident we are not misguided. We confess this faith every week just as this faith was confessed at our baptism and our confirmation. All teachings of the church are assessed and measured by the scriptural text so that we are not deceived. We must constantly check our teachings against God's enduring Word to confirm that we are not following a false Christ. His Word never changes, so there is no reason to think that his teaching will change. This world changes, but he does not.

Jesus goes on to tell us that there will be all sorts of terrible disasters on this earth: wars, earthquakes, famines, but we should not be alarmed. If you watch the news or read the papers, you might know what Jesus is talking about. Every time something terrible happens, a few hot days (longest heatwave in history), a drought (longest dry spell in history), a cyclone (worst cyclone ever), an earthquake or mudslide, or flood, a war or a potential war (you can see what other things fit in this category), we get told that it is the end of the world. Jesus tells us we should not be alarmed by these things; we should expect them and always be prepared for his return.

He even promises that governments will kill his followers for believing in Jesus. The disciples saw this happen; this has not stopped in our world. It still goes on; it just doesn't get much coverage on the nightly news. But worse still, Jesus tells us even family members, brothers or fathers, or children will hand their family over to be killed because they believe in Jesus. The confession we proclaim each week as if it is nothing is not easy. The cross that you were marked with at your baptism does not give you a leisurely ride through life; following Jesus is a challenging task.

But Jesus says the one who endures to the end will be saved, and the writer to the Hebrews tells us, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for he who promised is faithful.**"

Jesus is faithful to us. He saves us by keeping us in the faith so that we stay firm to our confession, the one that has been handed down to us through many generations, the one confessed by the Apostles themselves. Because he promised to return and save us and is faithful to his promises, we should not be afraid of war, extreme weather, or persecution because we know that Jesus will continue to provide for us and strengthen our faith until he returns. We should always be ready for his return. Nor should we fear false teachers or

continue to listen to them; instead, we should mark and avoid them and disassociate from them.

This is what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about in the text we heard today.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence** to enter the holy places **by the blood of Jesus**, <sup>20</sup>by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>**let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:19–25 (ESV)

The Holy place refers to that part of the temple that was only entered once a year and then only with great trepidation. It is now open to us constantly because Jesus' body was torn, as was the curtain. The location is also open to the whole world, for it is not bound to the earthly temple building in Jerusalem but is bound to Jesus' eternal human body that is in heaven and has filled all things and is, therefore, ever-present. Therefore, when we are encouraged to enter the Holy Places, we are encouraged to enter into Heaven itself. Not because we are worthy or holy on our own but because Jesus makes us holy and perfects us and is perfecting us.

We should approach the throne of Grace with confidence. We should come knowing what Jesus is giving and knowing that he wants to give it to us: his forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. When we feel like we can't endure, it is almost always because of sin; it might be our sin that burdens us or someone else's sin that makes us feel ashamed, angry or even bitter. In the absolution, he delivers what he won on the cross for you; he sets you free from your sin. This is how you live in your baptism; you get to receive and go over Jesus' forgiveness for you to set you free.

When you come to Jesus' house, you hear his Word. You hear all the great things he has done, will do, and continues to do for you in His Word, both read, preached, sung, and spoken to each other; he stirs us up to do what he desires us to do. He stirs us up with His Word so that we endure to the end.

Dear children of God, this world is not permanent, as we foolishly believe. It is only temporary and will come to a swift end when Christ returns. But he has assured us and given us all we need to hold fast and endure:

- He has given us faith to confess that he is the only Son and Saviour and that he saves us through his death and resurrection.

- He has given us his baptism to mark us as his very own children, forgives our sins, and leads us in daily drowning our sinful selves to rise as his new creation.
- He has given us his holy Word to identify the good deeds he requires, the sins he despises and the false teaching he warns of. And to reveal to us the Saviour.
- And He has given us his very own body and blood to keep us in His confession, to strengthen our hope, to minimise our wavering, forgive our sins and keep us united in his body.

Jesus says; The one who endures to the end will be saved, so Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Amen

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and your minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.