

“Naming the enduring”, a sermon based on Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25 and Mark 13:1-8 preached by Kerry Enright at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand on 15 November 2015.

Three images from our readings today:

1. A toppling temple.
2. An open curtain.
3. An aching body.

Jesus said - “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

No ordinary buildings. It took ten thousand men a year and a half to build, and some building went on for years. A thousand priests worked as masons and carpenters. And the stones, many twelve metres long, a 100 tons heavy. 35 acres of buildings and land. The temple, impressive, solid, magnificent. All thrown down.

And what of their attachment to that temple? From across the Empire they travelled, for days by boat and three days by caravan, to be cleansed and purified, to encounter God. A place of worship, ritual, gathering – the place of God. The associations, the attachments, the feelings. All thrown down.

Then desecrated. A statue to Zeus, the killing of pigs. Tower and temple, falling to dust.

So after that, what is left?

If the form of faith is taken away, the associations and attachments, what is left?

The writer of Hebrews says Jesus opened a new and living way through the curtain.

The form is in front of the curtain, the bit we see and touch, the bit we more easily discuss: the beautiful building, the ritual, the family association, the personal interaction.

Jesus though takes us through the curtain.

To the presence, the holy one, the other one, the loving one: God.

When the stones are thrown down, when all falls, it's the presence that endures, only the presence.

If we never speak of that presence, we never seek to name and sing and act from beyond the curtain, all we have is dust, toppled temples, thrown down stones.

What comes to us from beyond the curtain?

The kingdom of God, the rule and reign and way of God comes to us.

Our bodies ache for the birth of a new way, a way of peace, a way of justice, a way of Jesus Christ.

When we look on what has happened in Paris and Beirut and Baghdad, our bodies ache for our world.

Is it though just the ache of lament, important as that is? Is it also the aching for the coming of God's way with us, so that the ache becomes the birth-pangs of God's coming kingdom?

The aching of our bodies become birth-pangs of God's coming kingdom, so our aching is of new life.

The aching, the pangs, the pain, beginnings of a new creation, a new fullness.

A toppling temple, an open curtain and birth-pangs of God's kingdom coming among us.