

Out of birth pain, comes out new birth

Here we are, during the last week of Jesus's life on earth. After watching a great amount of money deposited into the treasury in the Temple, Jesus and his disciples sat on the Mount of Olives and looked over this magnificent building, but predicted the destruction of the great Temple with these hopeless languages of the end times. Yet, Jesus says, "it's just a start sign, the end is still to come."

I remember when I failed in the college entrance exam, I was crying and crying because I realized I couldn't go to my dream college, I was afraid no other colleges will accept me. I felt my future was over; When I broke up with my ex, my whole heart broke, I was afraid I will never find another like him. I felt my friends and family never understood me. Truth is, that I felt this was the end of the world; When my grandfather died, reality struck me hard and I was scared I won't ever see him again in heaven; When the events of September 11th struck New York City, I was only ten years old, I was terrified at the fact that one day terrorists may come to my hometown and destroy my home.

News networks across the country and the world report dire news spanning from wars and conflicts abroad to the mass shootings here at this country. From the wildfires in California to the snow storm that hit New England. When I wake up tomorrow morning, there will be more to come.

The world we are living in now has a lot of influence on how we understand the words of God. When bad news are happening all around us, those resemble many of the signs of the end times. Am I living in the end times? When will that be? I don't have the answers. In fact, Jesus never gave us an answer in the Bible. Jesus said, "about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Disciples also asked the same question, “Tell us, when will this be”. We all want to know when, what time it will happen. We all have the sense of **fear for the uncertainty of future. The fear of loose, the fear of suffering, the fear of death.** But we know for a fact that our faith never ends with death nor fear. Jesus didn't leave us in this hopeless destruction and chaos. He brought the words of hope: **“This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”**

We all know, and some have experienced the physical pain that women endure while giving birth. To give birth is one the most painful experiences a woman has to go through. Nowadays, there are a variety of ways people can choose to give birth and it would greatly help to reduce the pain. However, 2000 years ago during Jesus's time, people could die by giving birth.

It is very easy for us to be scared, to be distracted by this end of time language. It is also very easy for us to focus on the pain and risk of giving birth, but forget the great gift of newborn baby. **Jesus didn't call us to live in fear and suffering, but to live with hope in the midst of chaos and hopelessness.**

When I failed in the college entrance exam, I began to realize I had too much confidence in myself. The confidence that I thought I would never fail and the confidence that I will go to my dream college. It is this very time that God reminded me that all things come from God and without God I am nothing; When I broke up with my ex, I started to self-examine. I started to learn how to respect, encourage, and be a good helper for my other half. I started to learn what a healthy relationship looks like; When my grandfather died, I started to learn how to pray for others; When bad news happen, I learn on how “not to be alarmed or afraid” but to prepare and hold on to the hope. I started to learn what I can do to help, to speak out for injustice, to feed the hungry, to bring the light out of darkness.

When the great Temple was torn down, that was never the end of the story. As it was said in today's scripture (Hebrew 10:16-18): we no longer need priests to bring the offering again and again. For Jesus suffered and died once for all. The old were torn down and new covenant was put in our hearts. **To torn down is to rebuild.** This is exactly what this hope looks like.

This hope is that,
when nations against nations;
when the war breaks our hearts
when the system fails;
when people lose trust for each other;
when our friends/families disagree with each other;
when relationships are broken;
when we lose our loved ones;
when our future is filled with uncertainty;
when the earthquake inside us shakes our lives;
We know that **God is always standing with us in the midst of the hopelessness, reminding us that this is not the end, but the beginning of a new birth.**

As we prepare for Thanksgiving, the hope for us is that we will gather with our families and we will have plenty of food. However, not all of us can be with our families, and many even don't have a home or food. What does this hope look like for them? What can we do to help? This week we are celebrating the ministry of Fellowship Meal team. We thank you for your help so that each month we have this hope for great food and fellowship time.

Today I want to invite you to think about two questions:

What does this hope look like in your life?

How might God be working for a new birth in you? Amen!