
The sermon text for today is based on the Gospel,
Luke Chapter 21, verses 10 to 12, 18, 19.
Provided by The Lutheran Church of Australia

God's Uninterruptible Love

"Countries will fight each other; kingdoms will attack one another. There will be terrible earthquakes, famines, and plagues everywhere; there will be strange and terrifying things coming from the sky. Before all these things take place, however, you will be arrested and persecuted; you will be handed over to be tried in synagogues and be put in prison; you will be brought before kings and rulers for my sake. But not a single hair from your heads will be lost. Stand firm, and you will save yourselves.

Interruptions can be annoying. You are watching a movie on TV and just when the story is getting exciting a 5 minute advertisement break comes on destroying the moment.

You decide that it's time to start your Christmas cards and letters but as soon as you put pen to paper someone in the family is hungry, can't find something, or there's a fight that needs some parental intervention and there goes all your good intentions.

Sometimes interruptions, though initially annoying, can be creative and constructive. Anyone who deals with people and their struggles and issues in life will often find their plans for a day interrupted as an emergency phone call, a visit to a hospital bed, or a lengthy conversation provides an opportunity to make a positive difference in a person's life. Pastor Gerhardy writes here: *"I would hate to count the number of times I have been called in the middle of the night to hospitals, called to resolve domestic violence issues, to talk the depressed out of doing something dangerous, to stop neighbours arguing or relatives shooting one another. The most heart wrenching of these involve the sudden interruption of the life of a child. None of these situations were ever planned; they were always an interruption; they always put anything else I was doing on hold; they couldn't be ignored."*

The whole story of the Bible can be looked at from the viewpoint of interruptions. The devastating effects of sin interrupt the peace and harmony of life in the Garden of Eden.

Sin interrupts God's plans for the world. God had created a beautiful world and had put beautiful people in it but sin interrupted the beauty of God's world. In turn God interrupts sin by becoming a human being who lives among us filled with grace and truth and dies for us.

Moses was happily looking after sheep and keeping out of trouble when his life was interrupted by a voice from a burning bush. It was God who was challenging him to step out of his comfort zone and demand that the king of Egypt let the people of Israel go free.

God's people were caught in sin and were drifting away from God and so he interrupted the lives of ordinary people and sent them as prophets to interrupt their drift away from him and bring them back into a relationship with their Creator and Saviour.

The whole Gospel story is an interruption. God made flesh interrupts the power of sin and death in our world.

The announcement of the birth of Jesus interrupts a young girl's life and her wedding plans. The silence of the night is interrupted when angels announce the birth of the Messiah.

Jesus' sermon is interrupted by a man with an evil spirit. The sermon gives way to the power of God which interrupts the power of Satan in this man's life and with just one word from Jesus the evil spirit is cast out.

As the disciples stroll into the town of Nain enjoying a friendly chat with Jesus they are interrupted by the loud wailing and crying as a group of mourners pass by. Death is always a powerful interruption to our well-laid plans. This funeral procession and the mourners' grief are interrupted as Jesus restores life to the dead man and gives a promise that all of us who believe will one day experience this same interruption to death when we are raised to life.

A traitor friend who needs to go and sell his Lord for the price of a slave interrupts Jesus' celebration of the Passover with his disciples. This same traitor and the armed guards interrupt Jesus' prayers in the Garden. And finally, the sadness and confusion after Jesus' death is interrupted by the news that he has risen. His tomb is empty.

Interruptions are events in our lives that can't be forced back any more than we can hold back the tide.

Today's difficult gospel text makes us aware of the interruption that will affect the whole world. Jesus is leaving the temple and he is looking around at one of the most magnificent structures in the world at that time. He tells his disciples that this grand monument will be destroyed. We know that this happened at the hands of the Romans, but even if the Romans hadn't touched the building, the forces of earthquake, fire, storm, and plain neglect would lead to the ruin of the temple much the same as the once magnificent structures in Greece and Rome. The history of the temple will be interrupted and brought to an end, he says, and it was.

He goes on and says that everything we cherish, every institution and tradition, every treasure that we count on and store up will be interrupted and brought to an end. Wars,

earthquakes, famines, and other disasters in nature, persecutions when family members will rise up against other members of a family, will interrupt our way of life and the peace we enjoy. Families will be interrupted; businesses will be interrupted; governments will be interrupted.

We can see this happening in our world.

Peace and safety in our world and in our community are very fragile things and can easily be interrupted by hostility, bloodshed, robbery and fear.

We can see how easily nature can interrupt happiness in our world. We have seen the devastation that a storm can produce in the Philippines.

The place that Christ had in the hearts of the people of our nation has been interrupted and replaced with all kind of other religious values that can easily be misunderstood as Christian or compatible with Christianity when clearly they are false.

The strength and harmony in families has been interrupted and eroded by violence in the home, divorce, pressures, stresses, rebellious children, and the need for parents to work longer and harder.

The interruptions that we experience almost on a daily basis are reminders that things in this world are very uncertain. We are reminded that at any time our own life will be interrupted and that there will come a time when the history of our world will be interrupted. This last and final interruption will happen when Jesus comes again and this world will pass away.

When you think about it, the interruptions that we experience in life can make us feel very insecure and uncertain. Everything around us can be very shaky and uncertain.

Everything that we once considered solid and secure; what we once thought to be the centre of our happiness and peace can suddenly be interrupted and we are left with nothing. Take the story of Job in the Old Testament who had everything and in an instant it was all gone.

But Jesus wants to make it quite clear in our reading today that there is one thing that will never be interrupted, that is, the love that our Father in heaven has for us. Jesus says, *“Not a single hair from your heads will be lost”*. Regardless of what may happen to interrupt our peace and happiness in this life, nothing will interrupt God’s love for us.

St Paul puts it this way, *“Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

“Stand firm”, Jesus says in the last verse in our reading. Trust and believe in that love for you.

“Stand firm” and trust that loving hand that wants to hold yours as you walk life’s journey. Even though the history of our world will be interrupted, nothing is able to interrupt God’s love for you.

“Stand firm” and believe that Jesus’ love has forgiven all your sin and prepared a way for you to eternal life.

“Stand firm” and believe that he will stand beside you and help you no matter what kind of interruption will disrupt your happiness and peace in this life.

“Stand firm” in the knowledge that even though all kinds of disasters may come God loves you and he will not allow anything interrupt that love and care for you.

On the day we die or when Christ bursts into this world on the last day (whichever comes first), that will be the last interruption that we will ever experience. There will no more interruptions by sickness, death, wars, natural disasters, accidents, crime or whatever. We will be taken into God’s presence and join those gathered around the throne of God.

The words of the psalm are very helpful when we think of this final interruption, *“We will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths; even if the seas roar and rage, and the hills are shaken by the violence. ... The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge (Psalm 46).*

In the meantime we need to deal with the interruptions that take place in our everyday life, especially those interruptions that bring us fear and grief. The apostle Paul had to deal with these kinds of interruptions often. Shipwrecks, jail, hostile people, sickness interrupted him in the work God had given him to tell the good news about Jesus. But nothing interrupted his trust in Jesus.

How easily is our trust in Jesus interrupted? How readily do we allow our pet sins interrupt the newness that we have in Christ? How often do we allow or even try to find interruptions that keep us away from reading God's Word, praying and worshipping together with our fellow believers? How willingly do we allow our sinful nature and Satan interrupt our walking God’s ways?

God grant that the Holy Spirit would interrupt every sin, every temptation, every fear and doubt, and remind us every day that God's love for us is uninterrupted. God grant that our commitment and faith be as uninterrupted as God's commitment to us.