Grace to you and peace from God the Father, Jesus Christ our Savior, and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer. Amen.

 If this is not a timely passage for this week. I’m not sure what would be. And, to be clear, I would have said the same thing if the results of the various elections from this past week would have been different. This passage in Luke has a lot to say to our context, our county, and our country this week. No matter what basket we choose to place our eggs socially or politically, this text has something to say to us. In short it is this, if you are placing your faith in any basket other than Christ’s, you’ve picked the wrong basket.

I have been thinking and praying and pondering the sermon this Sunday for at least a month. Before I knew the results of the elections. Before I even looked at what the readings were for today. I knew that this was going to be a challenging week to get up in front of you and give a sermon. Even if every person in this room voted the exact same way, and I am sure you did not, this sermon would be a difficult one to preach. First of all because of the content of this passage of Scripture, and secondly what this election season has looked like. Somehow the meeting of the two at this point in our lives seems quite fitting. In many ways what has happened inside and around us here in the US sounds a lot like what Jesus talks about happening when he foretells the destruction of the temple.

Now it is good to know that the book of Luke was actually written 10-15 years after the temple was actually destroyed. So, this author is looking back at what happened and connecting what happened when the temple was destroyed with what he knew of the teachings of Jesus. However, this fact does not make any of these words less striking or less true. And it certainly resonates just as much regardless.

At the time of the Temple in Jerusalem, it was so important and adorned so exquisitely that it had become an idol. Though the original ornaments were dedicated to God, the building of the Temple became more important than the God they were supposed to be worshipping there. If you will remember, God lived in a tent for a long time and when King David wanted to build him a Temple, God said no. A temple or church is only as useful as its ability to provide a space to worship and serve God.

When the Temple was destroyed, so was many people’s faith. They were sure that God had abandoned them and that the world was coming to an end. Maybe Christ was coming again right then and there because that is the only explanation if God was going to allow his house to be destroyed.

That temple is also our country. There are those that think that the country has already been destroyed, that we are looking back at the past 8 years or even longer and thinking that our country, our government, and maybe even God have betrayed us. There has been a lot of fear that has been cast and built throughout those years and throughout this election season. Fear that has been divisive and dangerous. Fear that has been destructive and demonizing. And that needs to stop.

There are those that think that because of Tuesday’s result’s the destruction of our country is imminent. That we are no longer safe here and that the beautiful direction that has been the past 8 years will now be completely reversed and all is lost. There is a lot of fear that has been cast for them as well. Fear of totalitarianism and terror. Fear of racism and bigotry. And that needs to stop as well.

Our fear needs to stop. The fear mongering that has been used and played on has destroyed the temple that was our country. We used to stand with those who were oppressed and beaten and bloodied be the world. Our Statue of Liberty beckons with the words “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses longing to breathe free.” We spoke of the American Dream because there was hope in this country. But our hope has been overcome by fear as we find, form, and feed divisions between us. Families have been dismantled by this fear. Friendships have ended over this fear. We have stopped having discussions about things we disagree upon because of this fear and it has tortured many people’s hope into submission and even death. And that is something to mourn. For so many on any side of the issues or the party lines, these past months have been the death of our temple of what America was supposed to be.

In figurative terms nation has risen against nation, the earth has be shaking under our feet. We are starved for love, understanding, and patience. Our famine is of acceptance, camaraderie, and vision. Dreadful portents and great signs from heaven saying that this is the end. And we are hurting across the nation this day because of these signs.

A nation torn apart is not easy to repair. Some of the things that have been said and done cannot be taken back. Pandora’s box cannot contain the titans of divisiveness that have been set loose lately. It just isn’t that easy. But our temple has now been destroyed by this election and it is complete. The day that we have all been dreading as we trudged through all the hardships that the battles leading up to November 8 is now over. And we must try to mend the fences that have been destroyed and Jesus gives us vision and mission for this very thing, as he did to those in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem.

He says “This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance, for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ”

Jesus says that when destruction and division and horrors of this world, as was the destruction of the temple was for the Jews and Christians in the first century, we are made to testify with the words that he gives us which none will be able to contradict. But this only works if it is Jesus to whom you are looking for the wisdom and words.

In times such as this year has been, it is almost our default to put our hopes for the future of our nation on the backs of our leaders whom we elect. We hear their proposals, we listen to their vision for the country and hope that they will be our savior from the trials and tribulations that come – whether it be economy, foreign relations, policy, morals or any number of other things. But the truth is that they will all ultimately fail to provide a hope that can be fully realized. George Washington failed, Abraham Lincoln failed, FDR failed, Barack Obama failed, Hillary Clinton would have failed, and Donald Trump will fail as well. And their failures cause us to despair or lash out or act irrationally. However, our true hope does not come from an elected leader, or even the United States of America. Our hope comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

And in those times of despair, we are called to remember, testify, and proclaim that hope to the hurting and to the happy. And that testimony is one of love and forgiveness against all hating opposition. Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Perhaps you have felt persecuted or have been persecuted. Either way, we are to speak love. Our testimony is one of reconciliation against all division. Perhaps you have stopped speaking to others or others have stopped speaking to you over politics. Either way, we are to seek to reconcile and be reconciled to one another and move forward together.

And our testimony is one of living in this world, but of not being of this world. You have been named, claimed, and saved by Jesus Christ your Lord and God. Whatever the political structure. Whatever the turmoil or uncertainty. Whatever the hardship. Ultimately, we are held in the palm of God’s hand and forever have in the back of our minds that we are bound for a greater life than this. With that hopeful message in our hearts and minds, we are then freed to not be trapped by the quicksand of divisiveness and fear. Instead we are called to walk in the light and seek to be one in Christ, even though we don’t always agree. We are one in the Spirit of God. Whatever feelings you may be experiencing this day, know that you are loved and you will continue to be loved and accepted by me, by this church, and most importantly by God no matter what.

In closing, I would like to read you my favorite psalm. May it be a prayer, a promise and a vision for you as we move forward together from the destruction of the temple and seek unity as we face what every tomorrow brings.

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. 6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Amen. And may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.