

Shaken to the foundations

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* Mark 13:1-8

We are almost at the end of the church year, and today's Gospel reading prevents us from simply coasting to the finish. The Gospel journey is never easy, but neither is it unaccompanied by the God who makes life possible in any situation. Mark gives us a glimpse of a private conversation between Jesus and his disciples. It is a conversation that speaks of fear and reassurance in equal measure. Herod's Temple was incomplete but still known as the most beautiful building in the world. The disciples, like everyone else, are in awe of its sheer beauty and size. Jesus, however, draws their attention to something deeper. None of it will last, he says. This building, that has taken such years of skilled work, such vision to build, and such expense, will come tumbling down.

It's a salutary reminder for our own lives. Most of us pour energy into things that ultimately will fade into insignificance. It's well known that, approaching death, few people would say they wish they'd spent more time at work. Jesus goes on to warn against those who will interpret world events wrongly and, acknowledging that there will be war and rumour of war, he tells them not to be afraid. Within all of this is a call to something deeper, to the God who is greater than the whole of creation, whose kingdom lasts for ever. 🙏

Eternal God, whose love is stronger than anything else in all creation, give us the grace to trust in you when our foundations are shaken, that in every circumstance we may find the path of life and walk it. Amen.

Fuel Poverty

Part 1 – fear

by Lee Tulfer

When energy prices started to rise in response to political instability culminating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it sparked fear in many homes. Where people were "just about managing", doubling bills led to incredibly difficult choices – choosing between eating and heating became commonplace. Turning down the thermostat or turning off the heating to save money can increase the risk of stroke, heart attack, mental illness and respiratory problems, and can even lead to death. Hundreds

of thousands of people have found themselves cut off because they could not afford to top up prepayment meters. Hundreds or thousands of pounds of unrepayable debt leaves many people desperately worried.

"Do not fear," says God "... you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). It's hard for someone experiencing the desperation of fuel poverty to remember this, especially when the winter weather sets in. Yet prayer is a powerful thing, as is a church community. They might not pay our bills, but they can provide support and comfort.

Lee is Training and Events Officer for Severn Wye Energy Agency. 🙏



Ruins near the Southern Wall, Jerusalem

Books of the Old Testament *Obadiah*

by Richard Greatrex

At just twenty-one verses, Obadiah is the Hebrew Bible's shortest book. It flames fiercely with prophetic ire at Israel's south-eastern neighbour, Edom, before concluding more positively by vindicating Judah and declaring that those exiled will return to their homeland to encourage a revived kingdom of the Lord to expand into territories that were previously lost.

Nothing is known about Obadiah himself, although contemporary thinking suggests

that Jeremiah and Obadiah both drew upon a pool of stock prophetic sayings. The passions of the prophets were inflamed during the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586 BC, when Edomites joined in looting Jerusalem. Obadiah's prophesying reminds Edom that the judgement laid upon Israel and Judah for their sins against God would also fall on their nation for the violence they perpetrated upon Jerusalem. While the chosen people would eventually be vindicated and their kingdom restored, the focus on Edom indicates that the Lord of history's plans include all nations and every aspect of creation. 🙏

“As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.”

Obadiah 1:15