

1 Samuel 2:1-10

Psalm 16

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25

Mark 13:1-8

More Than Stones: Finding True Hope in Jesus

Sermon preached by Yoojin Song

Have you ever watched a Superman movie or read the comic? Most of us have probably heard of him or know his story.

In 2013, another Superman movie was released, called *Man of Steel*, directed by Christopher Nolan.

In the movie, Superman wears a suit with an 'S' symbol on his chest. For a long time, I thought this 'S' stood for 'super.' But there's a scene in *Man of Steel* where Lois Lane asks Superman what the 'S' really means. Superman explains that it's not actually an "S" but a symbol for hope in his world.

While many focus on Superman's superhuman powers, his true role is to bring hope to seemingly hopeless situations. In moments of crisis, disaster, or danger, people look to Superman with hope, waiting for him to appear and save them. In fact, in the Superman series, we often see scenes where people wait for his rescue in their most desperate times.

Not just in movies, but in real life, many people try to hold on to hope in the face of an uncertain reality and future. But where people place their hope can be very different. Some place it in wealth, others in their own abilities, but what really matters is if our hope is in the right place.

Just as people look to Superman in moments of crisis, trusting in his power to rescue them, we, too, have a Savior who stands ready to respond to our needs. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is always with us, deeply understanding our struggles and listening to our prayers. Our hope in Jesus takes shape as a daily reliance on His presence, His strength, and His unchanging love.

This hope allows us to do our best in what we can control, while entrusting what we cannot to Jesus, finding peace in knowing He is always near. Like the words of Psalm 23, we can trust that He will lead us in goodness. With this trust, we find true peace and freedom here on earth, knowing that He is guiding us faithfully each day. Just as Superman's symbol represented hope, the cross of Jesus reminds us of a far greater hope: a Savior who not only hears our cries but walks with us, offering peace in every circumstance.

Today's reading from Mark chapter 13 connects back to events in chapter 12. In chapter 12, while Jesus was teaching in the temple, He criticized the scribes. Their actions were not just small mistakes; they had twisted their religious responsibilities, making faith seem confusing and shallow. Jesus spoke out against their hypocrisy and empty show, and then He pointed out a poor widow who was giving her offering in the temple.

While the wealthy gave a portion from their abundance, this widow gave all she had to live on. Jesus praised her offering, teaching that the true value of giving lies not in the amount, but in the heart of faith and sincere devotion behind it.

In Mark 13:1, one of Jesus' disciples says, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Admiring the beauty of the temple, he was impressed by the grand stones and impressive structure. This reaction makes sense because the temple was the center of Israel's religious life. The temple in Jerusalem, built by Herod, was known for its grand and beautiful appearance. The Jewish historian Josephus even described it as being made of white marble stones, carefully arranged to look like waves flowing across the walls when viewed from a distance.

But Jesus responds differently. He says, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." He is foretelling the complete destruction of the temple—a prophecy that was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Roman soldiers destroyed it.

Hearing this, the disciples ask Jesus when these things will happen and what signs to look for. Here, it's important to understand that biblical prophecy is not given to simply satisfy curiosity about the future. While prophecy may indeed point to future events, its purpose goes deeper: it calls believers to respond in the present with faith and a renewed commitment to live according to God's will. This is what sets biblical prophecy apart from secular predictions or fortune-telling, which often aim to exploit fears about the future. Biblical prophecy always carries a message that urges us to live faithfully now, no matter what lies ahead.

So in Mark 13:32, Jesus says, "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Jesus didn't focus on the outward beauty of the temple building. Instead, He saw the inner corruption and predicted its destruction. This message reminds us that the true temple is not a building, but the community of believers, created through Jesus' sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 2:44-47). It also reminds us that our own bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Our true hope and trust should rest in Jesus Christ alone.

In our lives, we might also rely on things that are ultimately temporary, like the temple that would be destroyed. Jesus warns us in verse 6, saying, "Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray." We should reflect on whether there are things in our lives that we hold onto as if they could replace Jesus.

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Timothy Keller, the former pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, explains that our modern society is not so different from ancient cultures. He says that each culture has its own idols. For example, places like offices or gyms can become "temples," where people pursue blessings for a happy life and try to ward off misfortune. In our personal lives and society as a whole, we can find gods of beauty, power, money, and achievement, all holding a near-divine place. Keller points out how young people today, especially young women, often struggle with depression or eating disorders due to an extreme focus on appearance. Many prioritize money and success as the highest values, even at the cost of family and community.

Similarly, the temple in Jerusalem during Jesus' time was created for a good purpose—to connect God and His people. Yet, over time, an obsession with the temple itself led the leaders to become addicted to wealth and status, while the people suffered under misguided teachings.

He also shares the story of Chris Evert, a top tennis player in the 1970s, who idolized success. With the highest career win rate in history, she considered retirement with great fear. She once said in an interview, "I was afraid of letting go. Who would I be and what would I do without tennis? Winning gave me a sense of worth and applause, and I needed it to feel like someone."

Yet, in times of crisis, wealth, status, and achievements often fail us. Wealth, status, and achievements cannot protect us from war, famine, economic instability, or natural disasters.

Like the disciples who admired the beauty of the Jerusalem temple, it's easy for us today to be swept away by the glamorous progress of modern civilization without stopping to question it. Yet, as Christians, we are called to see beyond the glamour of the world and recognize the increasing corruption and moral decay hidden beneath.

Just as Jesus reached out to those who were marginalized and became a source of hope, our purpose as God's children is to love God and love our neighbors. Jesus' cross may have seemed like a failure in the eyes of the world, but it became the foundation of our hope and the beginning of new life.

Jesus, who became fully human and experienced life as we do, is not a distant observer of our struggles and pains. Even now, through the Holy Spirit, our heartaches and burdens are brought before Him. He sees our sorrow and suffering as His own and desires to show us a way forward in hope. When we bring our frustrations to Jesus in prayer, He listens to our stories and responds with compassion.

Following His example, may we, both as individuals and as a community, look around to see where help is needed and live as a light of hope, sharing God's love and justice with the world. Amen.
