

So today, Jesus comes out of the Temple  
and it looks like he didn't enjoy the service.  
He didn't listen to the music  
He didn't marvel at the glass stained windows  
He didn't think the sermon was great.

He dismisses the crowd, even his disciples,  
and heads with a few friends to his secret place, special place,  
the Mont of Olives, the garden where he will find comfort a few hours before dying.

Jesus is mad at the Temple.  
We don't know exactly what happened in there  
although we have a sense of it from this previous chapter of Mark:  
Jesus hates it when the ones in charge, priests and scribes, pretend to  
know who God is, know what God wants and what people should be doing.

There is a vanity, an emptiness to religion  
the author of the letter to the Hebrews underlines all too well:  
"Every priest stands day after day at his service,  
offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away the sins."

And so Jesus sits with his friends  
and teaches them about empty religion and holy dissatisfaction  
God is not in the Temple  
And the Temple will be thrown down.

You know, it must have come across pretty harshly for the disciples  
The temple that is destroyed  
it's much worse than the  
National Cathedral trembling on its foundations after the earthquake  
The Chapel burnt down at the Virginia Theological seminary  
It's not a work of art, a work of beauty  
that is damaged  
It's worst than lost history, lost memories.

The Temple thrown down,  
It's God who is destroyed and lost  
*It's God who is dead* we would say today.

Although the Hebrew Scriptures warn us again and again  
against the worship of idols  
the dumb idols who have mouth but cannot talk, eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear  
Still, there was a sense for the Jews that God was present  
dwelling among his people  
inside these four walls, in the sanctuary like a secure room.

Aren't we all this kind of believers?

Look, Teacher: *What large stones and what large buildings!*  
Look Teacher: *How large, great and overwhelming is our God!*

**Sunday, November 15**  
**Hebrews 10:11-25**  
**Mark 13:1-8**  
**The Rev. Fanny Belanger**

A God where you can hide from the rain and the storms  
A God you can lean on, a God that won't stumble  
A God that will always be there for you.

And yet,  
The Temple is about to crumble  
This Temple Jesus formerly compared to his own body  
This Temple is going to be destroyed in many ways.

When did the Temple crumble for you?  
When did you lose all that you once took for granted -  
And lost God, in the midst of the crisis?

A God who used to  
be in town  
inhabit  
the Temple of the Sunday worship,  
but also the Temple of our daily lives, the Temple of our certainties, the temple of our habits.  
Or maybe for now,  
the Temple is just shaking  
Or we are still amazed at his sturdiness  
Not feeling  
The earthquake underneath.

Last week, I was attending a conference at the National Geographic with Joel Satore -  
a famous photographer - beautiful life, beloved wife, three great kids  
and a job he was passionate about.  
But Joel told us how the Temple crumbled for him.  
He was in Alaska, with the wolves, taking pictures for an assignment  
And you know, the strangest thing is that he was safe out there  
in the wild, in the cold  
But he got a phone call from his own sweet home  
And like that - his beautiful young wife had just been found with breast cancer,  
a tumor the size of an egg.

Joel told us how his whole world was turned upside down  
How nothing mattered anymore  
the wolves, the assignment  
How, suddenly, in his own words  
*He lost his innocence*  
Stopped believing he was protected  
Stopped believing that for him and his family, out there, there was a god.

In clinical terms, "the death of the Father", it's how the experience of losing all our securities is called.

The destruction of the Temple, the death of the Father, the death of God  
This is what Jesus is going to experience  
very soon.  
Being utterly forsaken with nobody in this world, on the cross, dying a shameful death on his own.

Jesus has such a trust in God  
It's going to take a lot for him to feel his absence  
But he will cry out for a God who will never come - and it could be the end, period.

Like all the  
wars and earthquakes and famines of our lives  
could crumble over us and leave us destroyed, desperate and godless.

When you're suffering so much, people tell you  
*God is still here*

*But you just cannot feel his presence*  
And you think, if I cannot feel God's presence, then what's the difference?  
When you really suffer, you *do lose* God in a sense.

Yet the Gospel tells us: this is just the beginning of the birth pangs.  
It's not cheap grace,  
it's not cheap consolation.

Birth pangs aren't an illusion  
Birth pangs, in Genesis, are given to women as a sign of our separation from God  
Birth pangs, this is what we all need to go through to come to life.  
Well, to come to faith, we all have to experience God's absence.

We spend our life so afraid to lose what we have and who we are  
and we cling to it  
sometimes madly  
But the wonder is: we have to lose and mourn  
to find God truly.

On the cross  
When Jesus loses God the Father  
That's when Jesus becomes God the Son.  
You have to lose the God of the Temple  
the God in front of you  
to find God within you.

Joel Satore's story was not the end of the story.  
His wife recovered from cancer  
and in the meantime, he recovered too.  
He changed his life, aware of what matters  
Sitting on the porch with his wife at sun dusk holding hands for hours  
But mainly,  
losing the God who watched out for him and his family  
*whatever this God used to be*  
Joel started watching out for others and for the world around him.  
Today he is a modern Noah, building an ark  
An ark of photographs of all the creatures great and small threatened by climate change

To show the world how beautiful  
and fragile  
life is.

This is what finding God within us means  
when you lose the sturdy God of the Temple  
You find out that  
God  
is not a thing to be found outside of you, or even inside of you  
God is not a something that is somewhere to be found.

But God  
is a living God  
God is acting within us.  
The Spirit teaches us how we can  
breathe God in and out.  
Be God for ourselves, for others and for the world  
We become the body of Christ,  
God the Son  
We become the instrument where God is playing his partition  
And this is how we learn how God truly is the Father, how God truly is the creator.

God is not a god made out of stones  
God is a god of flesh and bones.

And so Jesus is mad at everybody in the Temple  
He heads out to the Olives garden to find God  
in the quietness and freedom of the trees.

When our Temples crumble  
When our prayers are empty  
When God is dead for us  
Let us go to Jesus, let us go find our great high priest  
Let us go find him in Gethsemane, let us go find him in the garden of the agony  
Let us find comfort in his anxiety, soothing in his wounds, strength in his vulnerability.

Jesus teaches us how to find God in the worst storms of our lives  
Jesus teaches us how to be with God, how to be God  
in this world, for others, not in spite  
but from the depths of our own suffering.

Because after all, according to Jesus,  
As tough as it is, this is not the end of the story  
*even the end of the world is not the end of the world*

The last word is God's judgment  
And God's judgment is neither wars nor destruction  
God's judgment in every circumstances is God's love  
love even love on the cross  
and the cross is resurrection.

Amen.