

# Saint Andrew's Daily Lenten Discipline 2026

## Walking the Palm Sunday Path

Week Three, March 1-7

Matthew 24:1-14

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

"Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

### **Synopsis Week 3: Matthew 24:1–14, The Beginning of Jesus's Temple Discourse**

In each of the three Synoptic Gospels Jesus issues warnings about coming calamities. All of the versions of this speech describe those calamities with some connection to the Great War and the subsequent destruction of the temple (66–70 CE). At the same time, there are also ways in which his warnings apply to life in general. The cross will not eliminate the threats of natural disasters, violence, religious bad actors, and hardship for anyone. Life is difficult and our vulnerability is an ever-present reality.

Only Matthew's version of this speech contains an interesting line, in which Jesus warns, "Because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold" (24:12). What do we do when the stress of this world becomes too much to bear? For some, loving others becomes too painful, too risky, or too costly. What is the church's role in the midst of all the chaos? That role is not to allow our love to cool, nor is it to withdraw and be concerned only about our own survival. It is, rather, to continue proclaiming the gospel in our words and deeds. The gospel is a message about a love that remains unquenchable and about a God who knows what it means to show solidarity with those who suffer because of the cruelty and greed that the rulers of this world exploit to their own advantage. The Palm Sunday Path calls us to be vigilant.

Matthew 24: 1-14 Commentary: Cody Sanders

Jesus has exited the temple fresh from speaking the publicly repeated refrain, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” and lamenting over the city of Jerusalem that “kills the prophets.” We join him now in a private space with the disciples.

### **The landscape speaks**

While this passage begins Jesus’s fifth and final discourse in Matthew, the often-overlooked voice in this text is that of the landscape: “When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately” (24:3). The landscape speaks throughout the biblical text, and this is a prime example. The Mount of Olives is an apocalyptic topography, a place of divine revelation, harkening to Zechariah 14:4. It is the geological kin of prophets of old.

It is no coincidence that the Mount of Olives is located, as Mark notes, “opposite the temple” (Mark 13:3). Topographically, it is **higher** than the Temple Mount. Chronologically, the Mount of Olives has known the sacredness of this land from before the temple was built, and destroyed, and built again.<sup>1</sup> Jesus pronounces doom for the temple, then takes the disciples and ascends an even higher mountain opposite the Temple Mount and begins to teach.

In our over-spiritualization of the teachings of Jesus, we often miss the very earthy ways they are rooted for Jesus’s first hearers. Our relationship to the landscape, to our ecological and geological kin within the realm of God, matters to our living of the Good News. Pay attention to where you place your feet along this Palm Sunday Path. Learn to listen to the language of the land and its multi-species inhabitants.

### **Apocalyptic vision**

We get apocalyptic material wrong when we imagine it as simply predictive of future events. Ernst Käsemann argues that the basic question of apocalyptic material is this: “To whom does the sovereignty of the world belong?”<sup>2</sup>

Eschatological and apocalyptic discourse sheds divine light to read the past, present, and future all at once. These statements do not simply “predict” coming events but **perceive** our collective lives in revelatory ways intent on encouraging our faithfulness, even amid trial and tumult. In the light of God’s rule and reign, the past-present-future events of our lives—personal and political—become relativized by the revelation of God’s sovereign, cosmic reign.

Wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines and earthquakes, torture and persecution are all laid bare as the circumstances of our life in the world, then and now. But don’t miss the fact that words of warning about the world’s woes are imbricated throughout with exhortation and encouragement for disciples following the way of Jesus.

The point of these prophetic words is not prediction, or even the events themselves. It is to call the community of disciples together in persevering faithfulness and persistent watchfulness—centered amid chaos—because the sovereignty of the world belongs to God. Our ministry of love and justice depends upon this centeredness in God’s rule and reign.

### **Threats from within**

In response to the disciples' question about **when** and **what signs** of Jesus's coming and the end of the age they should look for, Jesus's first words in reply were these: "Beware that no one leads you astray" (24:4).

Apart from the violence of the Roman Empire—which Matthew's community has already experienced in the 70 CE destruction of the temple prior to the Gospel's writing—a primary threat addressed by Jesus in these verses is **internal** rather than external. "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray" (24:5).

In Matthew's time, these false messiahs may have been any number of figures known to his community and named by Josephus. But in our day the threats from within our own wider Christian communion are more likely not coming as pseudo-messiahs but are coming **in Jesus's name** with the cross draped in the American flag, with messages of anti-empathy eroding the possibilities of love, with fear of neighbor supplanting solidarity.

The threat to the living out of the Good News of Jesus often comes from within as we distort the teaching of Jesus to bolster Christian nationalism, foment anti-trans hatred, encourage the turn inward in self-centeredness rather than outward in neighbor-love, or even simply ignore the enfleshed concerns of our day in service to our own spiritual comfort.

Our Christian imaginations are often so tuned to see the possibility of persecution all around us that we fail to notice that the erosion of our faithfulness more often comes from the slow, persistent distortions of faith emanating from **within** the Christian community.

### **The faltering of love**

Unlike the Markan and Lukan accounts of this scene, Matthew includes a unique line: "And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold" (24:12). Preaching this verse might be aided by harkening back two chapters in Matthew to when the Pharisees asked Jesus to name the greatest commandment in the law. Jesus replied, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (22:37-40).

Love takes shape in practice, in relationship, in the flesh. For a community like Matthew's—or a community like **ours**—attempting to root our lives in the greatest commandments of loving God and loving neighbor, the faltering of love is a grave threat to our mission as disciples of Jesus. If we are led astray amid chaotic and volatile times, our love will grow cold, and our mission will grow thin.

*Walking the Palm Sunday Path is a sermon series/commentary series for Lent by Working Preacher*  
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching-series/walking-the-palm-sunday-path-in-lent-a-sermon-series-for-2026>