

## **November: “Beware that no one leads you astray”**

***November is a little different as writer, Sarah Alice Allcroft, reflects on the passage of [Mark 13:1-8](#)***

The disciples stood in awe of the architecture and stonework of the city, the grand designs of Empire all around them, but Empire things always come with Empire prices. The cost of these things isn't always immediately recognisable, and it usually comes in the form of not just a monetary cost, but a cost to others. Our lives, whether Christian or not, is a somewhat nerve wracking tightrope walk of trying to balance our wants, desires, and needs against the harm it causes others.

Apocalyptic statements are tricky, we all want to know about what's to come, and Jesus is intentionally coy on the topic. It's this air of mystery and unknown that pulls people in, but it's not the point the teacher is trying to make.

Kingdoms rise, kingdoms fall, and everything that has a beginning will end. If there's one certainty in the universe, this is probably it. This wasn't even the point He wanted to emphasise even though it was this they wanted to hear about. Instead? He tells them to be careful and not be led astray. There will be people who claim to speak on behalf of or even claim to \*be\* Jesus, but it will always lead to no good, and he emphasises later in Mark 12:38-24 the sort of thing to be wary of: the rigid adherence to the law of the temple priests, the ruthless morality, the need to cloak themselves in excess and extravagance.

We see this now, and the worst of them will call for discrimination, violence, and hatred under the supposed justification of scripture, relying on the ignorance of people who back them not having engaged with the texts on any meaningful level themselves.

The curious part is how this is tied to people's perceptions of the always imminent end-times and ratcheted up to fever pitch, so as to justify and excuse the enthusiasm with which people engage in methods of “conversion”, and failing that, vilification.

This is what being led astray looks like.

My advice? Walk away from it and focus on grace, on compassion, on love without condition or fear. Meet people where they are at. Learn the difference between 'eros', 'filio', and 'agape'. Fill your life with moments that build people up instead of tearing them down. Be a voice for the oppressed, especially when that oppression is happening in places that ought to know better. These are the kingdom things that Jesus pulls us toward, and these are the things that last when everything else has been swept away.

If nothing else, err on the side of grace; it's going to be easier to explain than demonising the vulnerable and saying you were just doing what you were “told” in the scriptures.