



Your most
powerful
testimony is how
you treat others
after the church
service is over.

Prepare to Testify

Scripture-Luke 21:5-19

...and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

November 13, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

Scriptures: Malachi 3: 19-20 • 2 Thessalonians 3: 7-12 • Luke 21: 5-19

Many passages from the Hebrew and Christian Testaments speak of end times. Obviously, the examples they use are historically part of an age that has now passed into obscurity. Nonetheless they all speak of destruction, of tragedy, wars and rumors of wars, undeniably, all those events that speak metaphorically of the end of all things, at least as they pertain to planet earth.

Mysteriously, however those dire predictions of the end of all things have not taken place, at least not yet. So, here we are still waiting to see if anything threatening will happen as foretold.

All these predictions, of course, are based on the assumption that life on planet earth comes about, lives for a certain length of time and then dies. So too, then, it is assumed that the planet itself is limited in the length of its existence. Obviously, all of this is merely a conjecture. For all we know, the universe will continue on its merry way until God says "enough."

However, what is more certain to all of us here on this planet, whether or not we are religiously inclined, is that we are responsible for life and growth not death and destruction. And yet, if one examines both the secular or biblical history of our world, it seems clear that we have tried in so many different ways to match the destructive forces of nature. Think of the wars fought, the annihilation or devastation of other nations and religious groups that have occurred throughout history.

Reflecting then on the events of this past year, in the world that we know so well, we can list countless events that tell us we are not truly brothers and sisters in a common world. I need not list them all; you have seen or read about them in our news services.

Even in the last few weeks you may have read of "airport-scare" events. Someone thinks they have heard shots and every one scurries for safety or runs out of the terminal.

Today, so many people seem to live on the edge in fear for their very lives.

This is the scenario of which we read in the scriptures for this Sunday. The prophet Malachi, for instance, predicts "a day when "all the proud and evil-doers will burn as stubble, nothing will be left." But notice that Malachi also balances off this fear with the prediction that all who fear God's name will observe "the sun of justice coming with its healing rays."

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonian Christians, he observes that many, imagining that the end times are near, have simply stopped doing any productive work and now are merely sitting around gossiping.

Again, however, Paul wants to balance such irresponsible behavior by telling them that their responsibility is to "work quietly for the food they eat."

Finally in the gospel of Luke, Jesus predicts the advent of kingdom wars, great earthquakes, plagues and famines in various places, fearful omens in the skies, even great persecution, religious and personal. Jesus balances off these dire predictions by promising, "not a hair of your head will be harmed. By patient endurance you will save your lives."

So, once more, we turn back to our own times in the Twenty-First-Century world that we know so well. Like the prophet Malachi, Paul and Jesus, we must ask ourselves how we should balance off the many frightening events of our time with something hopeful, productive and gracious? Obviously, most of us are not in a position to control worldwide events, but we all do live in small communities of religiously like-minded people. We can all do something to balance off the fears that surround us with acts of justice and charity. The end is not yet, but while there is still time, let us do what Paul suggests, "working quietly earning the food we eat," or as Jesus suggests, "living patiently" with one another until it becomes clear that the end is truly closer than we might have thought.

Stewardship Thought



I always enjoy the time of Thanksgiving Worship when the congregation joins in singing:

Come, ye thankful people, come, Raise the song of harvest home!

All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin;

God, our Maker, doth provide for our wants to be supplied;

Come to God's own temple, come,

Raise the song of harvest home.

As appropriate as that is, could it be deceiving? We can enjoy the congregational feeling and singing but miss the importance of being truly thankful.

Moses reminded Israel,

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands . . . But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth."

Deut. 8:10-11,18, NIV

If we are thankful, we may sing, but we will certainly adhere to God's teachings and remember that God is the Source of our strength, our skills, and our material blessings.