

**Rev. Deacon Joseph Klenzmann**

**Holy Comforter**

Richmond, VA

November 13, 2016; Year C, Proper 28; the 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; Luke 21:5-19

Lord quiet our hearts that we may listen to your still small voice, so that in hearing your word, we may respond in faith. As Jesus led his disciples, so lead us your children today.

We ask this in our name. AMEN

Have you ever noticed that toward the end of the liturgical year, the readings assigned for each Sunday takes on a more urgent tone and they talk about "THE END TIMES".

Modern prophets of doom and gloom are busy at work warning of Global Warming, Nuclear Winter, Earthquakes, and War, just as Jesus said and Luke writes in this week's Gospel.

For months now, we have all heard politicians say the end is near and that only he or she could save us.

Hollywood produces movies about post-apocalyptic worlds like the Hunger Games, Divergence, and The Plant of the Apes, *The Original One*, and Interstellar.

We are constantly bombarded with stories and news that an inevitable cataclysm will bring the world, as we know it, crashing down.

In fact, from before Jesus's time, from before recorded history there have been predictions of the end. All these predictions of the end and yet, from our bible readings we know that only God knows the actual time.

When we hear the prophecy of Isaiah, who describes a new heaven and a new earth or when Jesus describes how the temple Herod built will be destroyed.

It is like the boy who cried wolf; it is somewhat hard to be all worked up about these predictions.

Perhaps there is an important message within these "End Times" predictions for us today.

- Not for what might happen to the earth.
- But so we might be prepared for the endings that will happen in our lives.
- When our temples come tumbling down.

What I mean by our temples, is those things in our lives that we think will always be our safe place. A constant....

Those people and things that we can count on, things that give us pride and confidence.

Things that will always be there for us, and then, they are not.

There have been times in my life where my temples have crumbled. Just as King Herod's beautiful temple crumbled, just as Jesus predicted.

I suspect you may have had temples in your life crumble as well.

For those who have gone through a divorce, battled a grave illness, or lost their job knows what I mean.

It is those times when the world as we knew ends. All of the people, the institutions, and things you trusted in are gone.

Times like these have tested my faith as it has tested yours.

We wonder why God did this, where is she when we need her?

When the temples we have built, such as our careers, our health, our relationships, our wealth, collapse sometime we reach in desperation for any possible cures, or ways to hide the pain, some self-medicate. Some give up and are left with only rage and anger.

That is exactly what Jesus warns us about beware that you are not lead astray; for many will come in my name and say I am he, the time is near.

Do not go after them.

When it looks like the walls of your temples have collapsed and you are standing in the midst of the rubble that once was your life. The best thing to do is to hold on to what you know is true. Find the rock, the anchors that holds fast against the crashing waves of change.

Find the Truth.... The Truth that is God... Even when you question God or blame him for your disasters. Know that God, the Holy Spirit is upholding you. **So hold onto the truth that God Loves You.**

Jesus says do not spend a lot of time thinking up masterful plans to get revenge on those who hurt you.

Know that God will give you the answers you need; she will give you the wisdom and strength to get to the other side of whatever situation.

I like to watch or listen to a show called Forensic Files. Recently, I heard a story of a young woman was killed and the detectives had no leads, no suspect for years, and the case went cold.

Well, the woman's mom explained that her husband, the father of the deceased girl had passed away. After years of anger, self-torment and rage for the person that had hurt his little girl.

- Her husband just wanted to get his hands on the killer.
- He never could move on, he was stranded in the rubble.

It is as if the killer took two lives that day.

In other words - when your world as you know it is collapsing do not think of masterful strategies. Just do the right thing day by day. Because when you do the right thing, when you are as honest and loving as you can be.

When you put your faith in God, you will be a shining light of hope for all around you, and you will find your way out of the wreckage.

From out of that layoff or unemployment –

- Can come a completely different direction for your life, a new life full of thankfulness, and fulfillment.
- A chance to do what you have always dreamed of doing.
- A chance to teach, or to be a mentor, to do whatever you call leads you to. It could be a beginning of something wonderful.

Out of bereavement can come closure, a sense of peace, a better understanding of the gift we are given every day.

- A better understanding of the meaning of life.

I can tell you that out of that divorce – when people do the right thing, and do not think of revenge, and by letting the Holy Spirit uphold you when you are devastated and cannot stand by your self – a stronger family can be the product. A new chance for love, a new larger and somewhat complicated family tree, but a family that loves each other and is strong.

I wrote the rough draft of this sermon while on vacation away from news and election babble. I had no idea who would win the election, the reaction of the voters or of the candidates. Would the institutions that we have trusted fail us?

Just as I did not know the outcome of the election, the disciples did not know when the end would come or what the signs might be.

What advice does he offer his followers and us?

The truth, that God calls us all to love our neighbor.

Even though, we are scared and do not know what will come will tomorrow.

I know we all are called to love our neighbor as our self and to work even more determinedly toward social justice and a loving community.

Jesus tell us “For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict”. Let us use the words and wisdom we are given to give voice to the voiceless, the refugees, the poor, the homeless, the sick, and the dying.

Because if we do nothing and remain paralyzed with rage and anger, we are willing accomplices to end.

That is my end time prediction for today.

I have always focused my studies and reflection on the End Time predictions of these readings, but that is only half of the story. I had completely glazed over the good news.

That on the other side of whatever disaster you are in is a new beginning where you duct yourself off, get back on your feet, and start rebuilding. Knowing the Holy Spirit is giving you the strength and wisdom to go on.

One of my favorite prayers that has helped me through my “End Times” is from St. Francis De Sales

Do not fear what might happen tomorrow. The same Everlasting Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering, or he will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.

I have been silent about this week’s elections. As I prayed and contemplated the reading and our reality.

- I saw people protesting in the street,
- I heard people say that it’s the end of our country, or the end of the world,
- Canada’s immigration website crashed Wednesday because so many were investigation on how to immigrate to Canada,
- Many are in shock, angry and feel betrayed by the instructions they have believed in.

Nevertheless, the world did not end,

The government did not crumble.

But remember, **you know the truth, God Loves you:**

- Love your neighbor as yourself,
- Respect your neighbor, even the crazy guy around the corner,
- Breathe in the grace of God and breathe out your fears and frustration,
- Take one-step at a time, Take one day at a time,
- Become the voice for the voiceless, this church, is a safe place. Our Priests, and Bishops are shining examples of civility, reconciliation showing us how to do the right thing, to love and to PROTECT our neighbors.
- Hold your local and national leaders accountable for social justice. Let them know we will not allow our brothers and sisters loss any of the rights and protections they have recently won.

WE CAN BE THAT LIGHT OF HOPE FOR OTHERS...

We are stronger than one man-child is.

Be at peace, then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.

Amen