

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, 13 November 2022

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

Homily: Fr. Ken

As we reflect now both on the three Scripture readings and on our own personal lives, we may find an inherent tension in our Christian faith: between the indicative and the imperative, that is, between who we are and who we are intended to be; between the present and the future; between the life we are now living and the world to come.

If we focus only on this world, or only on the world to come, the Christian life is out of balance. For most of us, our attention is on the life we live now. However, the eschaton, the end of time, is still a part of Christian hope; and, it is essential to keep it in proper perspective and not to ignore it.

Of course, it can be easy to ignore it out of a lack of interest, lack of belief, boredom, or even embarrassment. Some easily reject the mythic language of apocalyptic imagery. For others, the simple contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous, the one receiving an eternal reward, the other a fiery punishment, does not express their complex experience of life. And others have long tired of the cartoon representation of Christian apocalyptic thought found in popular American culture, in which pundits, politicians, and preachers vie with each other as to who can best interpret: the last hurricane, political change, or gun violence as the sign of the coming end of time.

But we cannot walk away from the end, however difficult it may be to translate it into a coherent vision of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Why? Jesus will not let us. Jesus speaks of the end of time, in all three of the Synoptic Gospels and in much less detail in the

Gospel of John, describing the apocalypse in language that is both chilling and confusing.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus says, "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately". Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be great signs from heaven".

Events of this kind have been seen throughout history, though, and we are not to spend our time calculating the end of time.

The best balance is to concentrate on the reality that we will all face our end, whether the world ends in our lifetime or not, and to keep in mind that how we live in this life matters. No injustice, no cup of cold water given to one in need, is hidden from God who will bring all things to completion.

In the Old Testament reading, Malachi uses straightforward language that sets apart the end of time from every other day. There the voice of God speaks of "the day when I act". When one imagines the apocalyptic end apart from images of mythological forces of chaos and order, one must see the end of time as the time when God will act decisively to bring about the perfect justice for which we all yearn.

Certainly, in the midst of evil actions all around the world, perfect justice seems almost an illusion. Yes, human justice is rendered, imperfectly and partially. But what will bind the brokenness, what will heal the wounds, what will render them whole again?

Malachi directs us to this wholeness, saying, "The day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble", but promising that "for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings".

Jesus promises that neither persecution nor betrayal by family or friends can turn one from God's righteousness. It is not vengeance that leads one to ache for "the day" when God acts, it is the desire to see justice rendered perfectly and to see those who have been disbelieved, dishonored, and dismissed rise with healing.

When will this be? The balanced answer is that the end begins now. And we respond by living justly and righteously today.

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