

Life Does Not End When We Come to the End of Our Own Resources. Life Begins When We Come to the End of Ourselves, Because Then We Start to Put Our Faith Where It Belongs, in God.

Writers of apocalyptic texts such as the Gospel lesson for today “often mix together events that are currently happening with what is going on *beyond* history,” the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday. “What is going on is placed in the context of what is *really going on*, so that folks can see that when the world looks as though it’s about to end, God’s work is just beginning.

“For the followers of Jesus in our text, the import of Jesus’ words seems to be that things are going to get worse before they get better,” he continued. “The temple, in all its glory, will be destroyed. Wars and insurrections and natural disasters are going to blight the earth. Famine and disaster will ravage nations and peoples. Persecution of those who follow Jesus will be intense. We would not blame Jesus’ followers here if their response to Jesus at this point would be to throw up their hands in despair: to give up, to give in, to let go, to abandon hope.

“Indeed,” he said, “it is quite easy to empathize with the followers of Jesus in the text, because we can feel the same way about our world today, can we not?”

“For anyone with eyes to see, the good ol’ world of ours appears to be going to hell in a handbasket. . . . Even the most optimistic might be tempted to ask, ‘Where does it all end?’ ‘How does it all end?’ And, ‘Where is God at the end?’

“These were the disciples’ questions to Jesus in our Gospel lesson. And I like what Jesus tells them. Jesus says to them, ‘Boys, don’t panic. Don’t come unglued. Don’t lose your heads, and don’t lose heart. Don’t worry, because when the world seems to be falling apart at your feet, that is actually an opportunity for you to speak of me and to bear witness to me.’ It’s as if Jesus reminds his followers here and says to them, ‘Boys, I haven’t lifted you up to let you down.’ As if to say to them, ‘Boys, when you look around you at what is going on in this world, don’t forget to look behind that to *what is really going on*. And when you see what is really going on, when you see that hope and faith in human wisdom and this world’s structures have failed, that is the time to speak of me and turn peoples’ attention to me.’

“And what was true for Jesus’ followers then is true for us now. . . . Jesus did not bring us this far to leave us. He didn’t teach us to swim to let us drown. He didn’t build his home in us to move away. He didn’t lift us *up* to let us *down*. When things are so bad that we feel like there is nowhere to go, when evil tempts you into thinking that life has no meaning and has laid out the red carpet for us to the grave, saying, ‘Come on,’ (p. 2→)



“Christ the King”, east window at St. Mary Magdalen Church, Windmill Hill, Enfield, Middlesex, United Kingdom. “He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world,” we will hear Sunday in the reading from the book of the prophet Daniel, for Christ the King Sunday. Photo credit: www.saintmarymagdalene.org.uk.

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Sundays

10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service (11:25: Christ the King Sunday)

11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion

6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Evensong, tea & refreshments

Thursdays: **No Evening Prayers service tonight, Thanksgiving Day**

For the poor: Christmas needs: Hams, ready-to-serve rolls, butter or margarine, frozen pies, cake mixes, breakfast/brunch foods, eggs, muffins, pancake mix, sausage.

Readings, 11/25: Dan. 7:9-14; Ps. 93; Col. 1:11-20; John 18:33-37. **12/2, 10 a.m.:** Is. 2:1-5; Ps. 122; Rom. 13:8-14; Mt. 24:37-44. **12/2, 6 p.m.:** Ps. 111; Amos 1:1-5, 13-28; 1 Thess. 5:1-11.

Prayer Emphases: Latvia; Full Gospel Churches; First Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA, and the Rev. Dr. Charles Stanley; The Rutherford Institute; parishioners on Ustick Road.

(Sermon, cont’d.) don’t go. Instead, look up, look out, get ready, raise your heads, stand straight up on your tiptoes, because your redemption is drawing near. Your rescue is at hand. . . . It has always been the case that life does not end when we come to the end of our own resources; life begins! Life begins when we come to the end of ourselves, because then we start to put our faith where it belongs, in God, in God’s strength and purpose. . . . Our job is to look behind what is going on in our world to perceive what is *really going on*. . . . So come to the Table, and open yourselves to his gracious work in you.”