

Earthly Leaders Come and Go on the Stage of Human History, But the Stage is God's, He Writes the Script, and His Will Will Be Done

"Americans will go to the polls to elect our 44th President," and "citizens are concerned, nervous, and even fearful" about the outcome, the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his October 19 sermon. "People are anxious and worried," he said.

"Perhaps, then, it is a small act of providence that we are led today to the Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 45," with the children of Israel in exile and asking, "What is to become of us?" In this situation God calls Cyrus by name, more than 100 years before Cyrus was born, and commissions him to restore Israel to her homeland.



"The Vision of St Peter of Nolasco," by Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), *Museo del Prado*, Madrid. © Web Gallery of Art. In his vision Peter of Nolasco, in the white robe of his Order, sees the New Jerusalem as shown to him by an angel. In the Epistle lesson this Sunday (All Saints), we'll hear, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!" In the Gospel lesson we'll hear, "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God."

God enabled Cyrus to become the head of the largest empire in the world to that time, and to break the back of the Babylonians, the oppressors of the children of Israel. Then Cyrus "declares an edict that allows the captive Israelites to return to Jerusalem. . . .

"But ultimately, this passage from Isaiah is not about Cyrus, for God allows Cyrus to do all that he does not for the purpose of making Cyrus known, but for the purpose of making God known."

As you go to the polls, "hear this good news: Earthly rulers come and go, taking their place on the stage of human history. But be not deceived—the stage is God's, and every player who plays his/her part on the stage does so because God allows it." God "is revealing himself and making himself known. . . . God calls and uses all kinds of people to (p. 2→)

It's Not What We Know, But How We Live and Love What We Know

The Pharisees asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment, not to seek an answer, but to trip him up, the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said Sunday.

They were concerned with "theological speculation," but Jesus "is more concerned with real relationship, the relationship that began at Sinai . . . This relationship of love was characterized not by sentiment, but by complete commitment to the well-being of the other. It dressed up in work clothes, and expressed itself in every aspect of life.

"This love relationship is, for Jesus, the linchpin of the whole enterprise, and everything else derived from it. . . . For love is of God, and in the end, Christianity is about love. If we don't get that, we don't understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus, no matter how doctrinally sound we may be."

"Responding to (God's) love, and reflecting that love back to others, is the essence of what it means to follow Jesus."

When we stand before God, the question won't be, "How much did you know?" It will be, "How deep and pure was your love? . . . What did you do with what you knew?"

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On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sundays, 9:00 a.m.: G. K. Chesterton discussion series

Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

This Sunday, 6 p.m.: Evensong, then tea and refreshments

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

Readings, 11/2, 10 a.m.: Neh. 9:7-14; Ps. 149; Rev. 7:1-17; Mt. 5:1-12.

11/2, 6 p.m.: Ps. 84; Eccl. 3:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:27—13:13. **11/9:** Amos 5:18-24; Ps. 70; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Mt. 25:1-13.

Prayer Emphases: Switzerland; The Wesleyan Church; Hooksett Church of the Nazarene, Hooksett, NY, and the Rev. Dirk Ellis; Christians involved in forming and implementing public policy; parishioners on Beach Street.

(Oct. 19 sermon, cont'd.) accomplish his divine purposes. Many strange and unlikely characters may come and go, and take their place on the stage of history. . . . but never forget that it is God who writes the script, and it is his will, not theirs, that shall be done. . . . God is never caught off guard, and . . . never has to resort to 'plan B,' but will make himself known to the nations.

Chesterton's Orthodoxy:

Sunday's 9 a.m. discussion: Chapter 7, what we are calling "Solemnity and Levity" but what Chesterton titled as "The Eternal Revolution." For discussion questions, chapter text, and notes, visit www.EpworthChapelontheGreen.org.

