

Homily for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 16-17, 2019

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

Preacher: Nancy DeRycke

Many Scripture scholars think that Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher, that he thought the end was coming soon. So when his followers began to realize that the end might not be coming as soon as first anticipated, they had to figure out what to do with and how to live in the world around them.

And isn't that what we are called to do—to figure out how to deal with the world around us? Not many people today, if polled, would say that they are completely happy with the world as it is. (How's that for an understatement?!) Politics, wars, walls, famine, abuse, global warming, poverty, diseases—all kinds of crises and unsettling affairs. Some try to read into current events and find predictions that the end times are upon us now. But that is not our job; it never has been anyone's job to discover *the end*. It is our job to discover what to do in *the now*.

Some friends know I have always liked the story of "Chicken Little." She was sleeping and an acorn fell on her head. She quickly panics and decides she'd better go tell the king that "the sky is falling!" But first, she goes to tell the other animals (Goosey Lucy, Turkey Lurkey, Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky). On their way, they meet Foxy Loxy who deceives them: "I know a short cut—cut through my lair." But as they cut through, Foxy Loxy gobbles each of them up—all except Henny Penny who remembers she has to go back to sit on her egg and keep it warm. No one ever gets to tell the king that the sky is falling.

The moral of the story? Be careful lest we, as Jesus warns, be deluded and distracted by rumors or prophets of doom from what we are supposed to be doing *now*. This Gospel of Luke was written about the 80s AD, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (the end of the world that Jesus predicted—"nation rising against nation; earthquakes, famines, signs from the skies"). So 50 years later, the readers realized that it hadn't been the end—they had survived; God had seen them through persecutions and rough times.

What do you and I do in the "heat," when pressure is on, when we feel like there's no redemption?

Jesus reminds us not to give up—“By your perseverance (patient endurance), you will secure your lives....” For those who believe and trust in God, “...not a hair on your head will be touched.” (For some of us, that’s more significant than others!) God may not take away our sufferings or difficulties; but God will be there with us, giving wisdom and guidance if we are perceptive.

Even when the sky seems to be falling in (jobs, relationships, illness, faith), when we are up against the wall, how important it is to live our lives each day (kind of like Henny Penny) attending to the most vital things, sitting on the egg of faith, integrity and justice, and living out the values of the Gospel in our time.

Maybe you and I need an acorn dropped on our head to wake us up so that we don’t miss what’s happening in our lives. Regrets about the past and worries about the future are something we cannot control—they rob us of our present. Worries or living in the past detour us from the importance of *now*.

How do you and I live with perseverance, with patient endurance?

How do we deal with the world as it is right now? No easy answers, but we must do more than worry that “the sky is falling.” We can be beacons of hope, and join others who are beacons of hope to continue to do what we can—no useless shortcuts. Whether it’s writing letters, or speaking up, or praying, or contributing in some way to important causes—the time is NOW to make a difference in this world that is not finished yet.

A prayer addendum:

....So, we pray for Courage, to let go of fear or hesitation so we can speak and act when needed....

For a Spirit of Gentleness, Strength and Reverence, to respect and show care for all people and all creation...

For Wisdom, to know when to do something and when to stop and listen....

For Energy, to do what we can to improve our world...

...God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the Wisdom to know the difference....

