

HOMILY FOR THE THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 2021

Climate change, natural disasters, an enormous refugee problem and a pandemic: these seem to raise conversations around whether we are coming close to the end - that moment in history when Jesus will return and establish in its fullness, the Kingdom of God.

Not for one moment am I suggesting that these conversations are accurate.

When Jesus spoke about such matters as the end of time, he always reminded us that the timing was unpredictable. And, we certainly shouldn't be afraid of it. This is the outcome to which God is directing the world. We Christians should be longing for the life of the world to come. The best is yet to come.

And, really, the worst has already taken place, and we're still here.

When Jesus spoke about the sun being darkened and the moon losing its brightness and the powers of heaven being shaken; when he spoke about the Son of Man coming with great power and glory, it might be considered that what he spoke about, all took place at his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

The talk of the end times which we find in the first reading and in the Gospel reading, and in many other places in the Bible, are referred to as the Apocalyptic Writings.

They look to a battle of the greatest proportion between the forces of good and evil.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was a battle between love and the absence of love – evil. Christ's willingness to die was the most loving act any person could undertake. It was love of the greatest proportion. As Paul says in Romans, God proved his love that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. The absence of love, of the greatest proportion, was inflicting the cruelty of the Passion upon an innocent man and his crucifixion.

As Jesus predicted in the Gospel, at his crucifixion, darkness did come over everyone and an earthquake took place. We understand that this was a heavenly reaction to the death of Jesus who said, "The powers in the heavens will be shaken."

The resurrection which followed, was the revelation of, as Jesus said, the "Power and glory of the Son of Man" – a title for the Chosen One of God. At his Ascension, heaven saw, as Jesus said, "The coming of the Son of Man in the clouds."

What Jesus describes in the Gospel today, in many ways, is his own death, resurrection and Ascension. He even tells his listeners that all this will be taking place before his generation has passed away.

Interestingly, in Mark's Gospel and, as well in Matthew's and Luke's, when they record Jesus speaking of end times and of judgement, it is immediately before we are told of the plot to kill Jesus. What timing for such proclamations? He was speaking of himself.

The Apocalypse, the great battle, is described as the worst thing that could happen to the world. What could be worse, than the death of God?

The second reading spoke of the one, single offering which achieves our eternal perfection. There are no more sin offerings to be made. The worst has already taken place and, although we have no idea what the future will bring, it will be the increasing of what Jesus has already achieved for us.

Death and suffering continue to burden us but, such powers have already lost the battle.

In reality, for now, every day is apocalyptic. Love and the absence of love are both in tension against each other but, love will win out. Jesus has already seen to that. His sacrifice is for all time.

Love is the side we should choose and trust. Because of love, the best is yet to come. As Jesus and the angels so often say in Scripture, "Do not be afraid."