Spirituality
Pencil Preaching

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November 23, 2020

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“Teacher, when will this happen?” (Luke 21:6).

Rev 14:14-19; Luke 21:5-11

Today’ two readings focus on the end of the world. Revelations depict it as a great harvest of wheat and grapes and in Luke, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple and the coming of universal turbulence. Millennialists and apocalyptic visionaries have used these readings to stir expectation and fear throughout history. Jesus tells his disciples not to be deceived by false prophets claiming that these signs portended his Second Coming.

Luke wrote his Gospel after the Jewish-Roman Wars, the destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple, when many of these sayings appear to have come true for both Jews and Christians. Revelations applies the conflicts and calamities found in Ezekiel and Daniel to the persecution of the church by the empire, predicting the final triumph of the Lamb of God over all the forces of evil.

These texts endure in the popular imagination because the reality of “wars and insurrections, earthquakes, famines and plagues” continues to occur. Contemporary prophets add nuclear war, pandemics and now climate change to the dangers that literally threaten the planet and its inhabitants. Offered in the Lectionary as the church approaches the end of the liturgical year, these scriptures promote a time of sober reflection and a sense of accountability as we take stock of another year and resolve to do better.

Still, hope is the heart of the Gospel, and Apocalypse again enters Advent, a season of renewal in preparation for Christmas. This is God’s answer to human folly and sin. Our Savior is God in the flesh, Jesus the Lord. He arrives not as a divine visitor, a *deus ex machina*, but as one of us, emerging from within the long genealogy of the human family, bearing the hopes and dreams, faults and frailty, tensions and temptations that mark our earthly nature.

Jesus did not come to rescue us as passive recipients, but as full partners in the redemption of our world. His Incarnation opens our DNA and our destiny to the divine Life, restoring the original blessing to our fallen nature, now perfected by grace and empowered by the Spirit to transform the world. Discipleship is not a spectator sport but a frontline fight for justice as fulltime ambassador for peace and reconciliation.

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