

Proper 28 Pent 25
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Like many people living in the United States now, I was born in the 50s. Unlike many who were children of veterans of WWII, I was the last of 4 children coming as a shock to my older parents and my siblings, ages 18, 17, and 9. The 50s saw some incredible changes for our nation as well. There was remarkable industrial growth with a shift to living in urban areas. It was in the 50s that suburban life became the norm. That doesn't mean everyone lived in the suburbs...it's just that when we baby boomers, especially white boomers, recall the 50s, we often think about an idyllic lifestyle of the suburbs...and Leave it to Beaver. We don't usually recall the Cold War: We forget that this was the time the Soviet Union was aggressive in Eastern Europe and developed the atomic bomb, it was also when China fell to the communists; McCarthyism was at its height of sensationalism and fear mongering. We don't remember the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which declared separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional. We don't think about all those who were discriminated by Jim Crow laws and suffering the long term consequences of enslavement. We forget that we were fighting a war in Korea.

My own parents were working hard to transition their farm of a few dairy cattle and chickens to a more profitable cherry farm. They responded to the uncertainty of those times differently. My father responded with cycles of crippling depression and anxiety. My mother endured those rough times and many that followed with an enduring faith. It was her faithful persevering comforting presence that helped my father fall to sleep at night. It was her loving encouragement that helped him to get up the next morning and try to make it through another day of work.

When I hear these apocalyptic words from Luke I think about those 'good old days.' I do not believe that things are worse now and that the end of the world is just around the corner. In fact our times sound like Jesus' description two millennia ago: Time and again we hear of wars and insurrections. The twentieth century saw two world wars when nations rose against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes rumble often and some of them are horrific. We see the famines of Africa and the plight and plagues in Haiti.

But let me be clear; if I were suffering as much as the people in Haiti or the people of Israel of the first century, or even people of our own country caught up in poverty and exploitation, I might hope it were the end. I might even write stories or dream about the end of the world and how God's judgment would reign. I might tell stories of how those people who had done evil to me would burn up with the earth while the rest of the good people and me would be caught up in the heavenly rapture. The Bible's apocalyptic literature, like these words we heard today, comes from such times and places of hopelessness. It has fed the imaginations of writers and preachers through time. They like to scare people...often, because it is profitable to do so.

Jesus, on the other hand, does not want us to be scared or terrified. He does not want us to withdraw in fear or lash out with weapons. He has a different task for us, the task of testimony...to give witness to the God of our faith. Jesus said, "This will give you an opportunity to testify. He also said, "By your endurance you will gain your souls."

While I don't believe the end of time as we know it is just around the corner, I do agree we are in the end times as we have been for 2000 years....Jesus came, he died, and he will come again. And while we are waiting for Jesus to come again we are to give our testimony as a way to give hope to others.

Some peoples of faith tell their story in language that goes something like this: God told me to do this. God made me do that. Other traditions leave a little more to mystery...but nonetheless Christians are called to witness. There is no one right way to tell of our hope in Jesus Christ. Over the last couple of days at our Council meeting I am pleased to tell you that I heard many stories from our brothers and sisters around the Diocese of Atlanta. We are a thriving ministry here and abroad. Today's gospel calls the disciples, including you and me, to tell our stories...to witness to the God of Love. To share with others when we were open to God's presence and when we were closed to it, and what happened....We do this to help one another be open to God's grace every day....To convince people that no matter what is going on in their lives now... be it sickness, unemployment, foreclosure, poverty, bullying, depression, anxiety, addiction...that God is with them....and none of those things or anything else...not even death...can come between them and the love of God.

In the past five and ½ years I have told you some of my story. Soon someone else will come and tell you a different story. It's time for me to move on. I will miss you. It's been a wonderful ministry here with you. You have a beautiful holy place of worship, your church buildings and school are fine. I am grateful to Fr. John and the vestry of 2005 for giving me an opportunity to get to know you and serve you. I am honored and thankful to have served with fine vestry, staff and clergy all along the way. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served along side some of you. That's my favorite part, you know....when the light of Christ illumines hearts and people say something like....I am a plain old person...sinner, I have strayed from God, the church, my life has been good, my life has been difficult, but now I see it....that light has been there all the time...giving me enough light...the light of love and mercy...for the next step, and now I see that God...even... has...work... for... me. No matter your gifts...whether it be knitting, frying turkeys, listening, cleaning, painting...God has something for you to do in addition to telling your story of God.

So the light is leading Steve and me to Cartersville. We will tell our stories of life in God in a new parish. Let me say again I will miss you. You have shaped me by your presence, by your love, even by your forgiveness of one another.... In that mysterious way that we are all part of the body of Christ, I take you with me.

Now I am also wondering about your next step. More to the point of today's gospel, I wonder about your testimony...with whom will you share your story of faith and hope? Don't worry about the times or what you will say—God is with you, giving you all you need for the next stop of your journey. Amen

The Gospel appointed for November 14, 2010

Luke 21:5-19 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place? And he said, "Beware that you are not lead astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!'" and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them."

"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately. Then he said to them, "Nation will

rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.”

But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.