

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Pentecost

November 14, 2010

Malachi 4:1-2

Psalm 98

2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13

Luke 21:5-19

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There was a time in high school English class when we read the “classics.” The book I particularly remember was *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. I was struck then, and am struck now, by its opening line,

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”

Dickens’ novel is set in the darkest days of the French Revolution. It is the best of times, though far from perfect, if you are English; dreadful times if you are French. Perhaps that’s Dickens’ point: the times are good or bad depending on who you are. The good times come easy, don’t they? Compared to much of the world, and much of history, you and I have had many years of the good times of health and relative prosperity. The worries have been occasional and few, and we have had lots of support to deal with them. Life has, for the most part, been good.

But these have been the bad times for much of the world. Ironically, it has been the same time as our good times. I tend to awake and get up early, and find, having read the paper, not much to do but watch the news of television. That is not the way to begin the day on a positive note!

I do not recommend going out into the day carrying a full load of crime, natural disaster, hurricanes, earthquakes, cholera, explosions. Such is the news; the alternative is to be told how overweight and out of shape I am because I do not practice Zumba or own a special machine. The better alternative is probably to stay in bed.

Why do I tell you this? I do so because this morning's readings speak of much the same situation and pose the same question: "How do we get through the bad times?"

Can you imagine sitting next to Jesus hearing him tell of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem? It's the center of your life; God lives in there. Can you imagine hearing Jesus' prediction of social disintegration, families torn apart, trials and persecution just for sitting there next Jesus? Bad times are coming, terrible times. Just where do you place your hopes; where do you turn for strength and support?

Where does this age, this time of ours, place its hopes? If you really believe the marketing, you would say "technology." People will draw closer together through technology and electronic communications. We are told that it is so, aren't we? A little story: Happy and I were having lunch in a local restaurant recently. At the next table was a young couple. Both of them were texting someone throughout the entire lunch, never looking at each other or exchanging a word. They may have been communicating with somebody, but they weren't even present with each other. We see it constantly, on the street, in cars, in restaurants, in stores, at the symphony. If two people who are seated three feet apart aren't in communion with each other what does it bode for the bad times, where is the support and the strength? Is the world made better; is life improved?

Did Father Ingeman say technology is bad? No, technology can do many things for us, but there are things it cannot do. It is not the answer to the bad times. It cannot solve the problems of the heart. If not technology, what? I'm sure you know what I'm going to say. The

only true lasting support we have, in good times and bad, is faith, specifically faith that God cares enough to share those times with us.

Long, long ago Isaiah looked on a nation shattered and destroyed by invasions, captivity, and social disintegration and proclaimed that despite the darkness of the moment, a time would come when all would be made right, that there would be peace and justice and compassion and security. God's Kingdom would come. Has it come? In a way, yes. Slowly, slowly, to be sure it has come, even though early morning television may not bother to mention it. It hasn't come through grand pronouncements or programs; it can be seen in the selfless efforts of individual Christians. It can be seen in your efforts; it's that simple. It can be seen in your gift of time and talent and treasure to better God's work here, beginning here and, like a ripple, carrying to the ends of the earth. Never think that what you can give is insignificant; it is the very foundation of what will, ultimately, dispel the bad times.

Paul said it best. "Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right."

In His Holy Name.