

SERMON

17 NOVEMBER 2019

ISAIAH 65: 17-25

2 THESSALONIANS 3: 6-13

LUKE 21; 5-19

PSALM 98

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

I have a tremor.

It's not contagious; it's genetic, passed down generation to generation, usually in our sixties. My grandfather was an example of a pronounced tremor. There was some thought that he had had a stroke. We weren't entirely sure about him as he spoke only Swedish.

My father was self-medicated.

With some people it takes the form of the head shaking; our tremor is in the hands. Usually the right hand.

It started years ago when I was in Savannah. The neurologist ruled out Parkinson's disease and prescribed a medication – a beta blocker – that should stop, or at least lessen, the tremor.

The doctor was an Episcopalian; I knew her. She said that there would come a time when I would have to celebrate with my left hand which I thought was strange.

The medicine prescribed years ago in Savannah sufficed for years although, recently, it did seem to be losing its effect.

Several years ago, here in Valdosta, I was referred to another neurologist who decided that I needed a more powerful prescription and doubled the dosage. It has had an interesting effect.

Incidentally, I must apologize to anyone who was close to me when I was pouring coffee into a cup on a Sunday coffee hour. Also, an apology to anyone responsible for the tablecloth.

But I digress.

Do you ever read the side effects listed on the sheet of paper you get with a new drug? May I recommend it?

I have found several interesting effects in addition to having the tremor lessened, a little.

One side effect is fatigue or sleepiness. I simply doze off watching television; I have missed quarters of football and innings of the World Series. Of course I used to doze off with television with or without the medicine.

Worse than that, the medication can cause a depression, an unexpected sadness. Thus far, fortunately, I have been shaking and dozing but not depressed but I suppose the time will come.

Speaking of being depressed, imagine the disciples hearing Jesus predict that the Temple, as Luke says, "adorned by beautiful stones," would be destroyed, "...not a stone left on another."

I suppose the Temple had always been there for them, a symbol of the eternal presence of their God, completely reliable.

It is anger and fear and depression that brings them to ask Jesus "...when will these things happen? What will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

The Temple will stand for forty years until its destruction by Rome in the year 70. Jesus, their leader and teacher and friend is to die very soon. He is the living presence of God, not symbolic like the temple.

Jesus may be speaking of the temple; more likely he is speaking of the world, the life, that is to be for His disciples. Not only the disciples but for all those who will follow Him.

He warns of false prophets coming in the name of Jesus, claiming to be the reincarnation of the Messiah. He speaks of "...wars and uprisings."

He speaks of "...earthquakes, famines and pestilences...fearful events and great signs from heaven."

He warns His disciples that they would be seized and persecuted, and imprisoned, betrayed by "...parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends," even put to death for being followers of Jesus, hated by all because of Him.

What more might they need to hear? Of course, there was depression.

There was depression at the loss of Jesus. There was depression forty years later when another generation saw the Temple torn down and the city of Jerusalem destroyed. There has been depression for some over the past two thousand years when Christianity has been challenged and divided.

But we are here.

Why and how are we present after all these years?

The writer, probably Paul, in the letter to the Thessalonians, speaks in answer to that question.

He wrote "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance."

In His Holy Name.