

Title: The end of the world?

Today, is the first Sunday in Advent and we begin a new Church year. Our scriptural themes will reflect this and will focus on the coming of Christ. The church year starts with Christmas/Advent and the first coming of Christ as a babe in Bethlehem. It continues through Easter where we celebrate his crucifixion and resurrection. Then during the summer, themes focus on the work of the church. ending the cycle with the "end times." Actually, Advent serves a double purpose: looking at the coming of Christ at his birth at Bethlehem, and his second coming at Judgment day.

In today's gospel, Jesus warns his disciples about the end of the world. He tell them that bad things will happen at the end of this world. So, stay awake!!! But it is important to know that he doesn't tell them these things to scare them. For the Christian, the end of the world is not only destruction. For the Christian, good will come of these. These "bad" things will only be signs of the coming of a new perfect world which God promised us. The message of the Gospel lesson for today is, for the Christian, the end of the world is not a thing to be feared but it is the ultimate gift of God. Amen.

To understand the world's issues with the end of the world, one first has to look at the other end of the spectrum. One first has to look at the way the world looks at the beginning of the world. You see, according to modern scientific theories the beginning of the earth occurred 5 billion years ago. According to modern theories on the evolution of life some 150 million years ago during what is called the Cretaceous period Dinosaurs roamed the earth. The dinosaurs reigned supreme for 80 million years. Then some 65 millions years ago, all dinosaurs disappeared. No one knows why. More importantly, according to modern evolutionary theories, mankind first appeared only a million years ago, long after the last of the dinosaurs. This is the modern theory on the origin of man. However, this theory conflicts with the Biblical story of Genesis. One of our members, Pastor Paul Rosnau, has been on archaeological digs where he has discovered evidence that dinosaurs and man co-existed. These findings challenge the scientific theory of evolution. It will require a re-evaluation of the theory of evolution which we hope will reconcile it with the biblical record.

While this is a fascinating debate it is interesting only in the academic circles. The real struggle with the whole, “when did the earth begin”... “when did dinosaurs exist” debate, is not so much curiosity and scientific integrity, as much as it a debate over which is more reliable, the bible or science. In fact, it is more than that. The motivation behind the debate is primarily whether we can trust the bible or not. Atheists actually use this as an argument against the Bible, against God. An atheist named Richard Dawkins a physicist, proposed that you should only believe in things which have evidence, things which you can verify with your five senses. Your reality should be based on scientific reasoning, since scientific research is based on technologically enhanced measurements of the five senses. For this reason, he says, you cannot believe in God, or the Bible, because you cannot scientifically verify it.

The problem with this type of thinking is that much of the Bible is what we call “revealed knowledge.” It speaks about things of the spiritual world. It speaks of things which cannot be perceived by the five senses. It speaks about the soul, the spiritual world, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness forgiveness. It speaks about Eternal life in Heaven. By the way, many of the stories of the Bible have been scientifically verified. Nonetheless, much is still only understood through faith. Not only that but there are many things in the bible which conflict with my five senses, things which conflict with the scientific model of this world. Scripture speaks of miracles which violate the natural workings of this world. It speaks about the creation of the earth in six days, not 5 billion years.

But the real problem is not that there is a conflict. The real problem is that when the Bible says something which conflicts with science, that is, with my five senses, we start to doubt. I start to doubt because the human tendency is to trust our five senses more than faith... more than the bible. Why is this a problem? Because if my response to a conflict between the Bible and Science is to distrust the bible, then I will be lead to unbelief. “If the Bible is wrong about the things I can see. how can I trust what it says about the things I cannot see?” “If the Bible is wrong about the beginning of the universe, how can I trust what it says about the end of the universe?” or more importantly,

how can I trust what it says about my end? And basically, deep down inside, that's what I am most worried about.

Not only that, but the question "How will it all end?" it is tied to the question. "what is the meaning of life?" "What is our purpose for living?" If everything is just going to stop, like a machine and disappear, then "What was the purpose for living?" It is no wonder that there is so much confusion and anxiety about "the end of the world."

But the point is this.... For the Christian coming to grips with the end of their lives coming to grips with the end of the world does not end in despair. As Christians we are very clear about the meaning of life and our purpose for being here. In fact, for the Christian, the end of the world is a positive thing. because it means "Jesus is coming." Jesus is coming! That's a good thing!

This is not an easy concept to deal with. The Bible tells us that there will be an end to this earth, called Judgment Day. Our scripture lesson encourages us to see it with joy. There are many who struggle with this view of the end of the earth, especially the part about feeling JOY about the end of the world. They say "The bible teaches that "God will come down in Judgment and will wipe everything out?" That can't be right? "Why would a loving God wipe-out everything." "There is so much good and beauty in the world." They say "That doesn't seem fair." "Doesn't seem right." Well, that would be true if that was the whole story. The end of the world would be a bad thing, if it really was an end. For me one of the big revelations was when I realized that "the end of this world" is not really an "ending," "the end of this world is actually a time of "beginning."

How is this so? The Bible tells us that because of our fall into sin the perfect world that God originally created was marred. This is the reason why the world is not perfect. This is the reason why bad things happen in this world. For the people this world this may be an imperfect world, but it's the only one we got. so they see "its end" as a loss and they dread it. And technically speaking, they are right! AS a matter of fact, without God this world IS all you got. Without Christ this is all there is. Without Christ, the end of the world is a downer.

The end of the world will be nothing more than nations in anguish and perplexity the roaring and tossing of the sea. heavenly bodies shaken Men fainting from terror and apprehension of what is coming on the world, At the end of the world "Heaven and earth" will pass away" leaving nothing.

But for the Christian, this is not the case. This sinful world is not the only world we got. In fact, it is only a shadow, a reflection of a new world which God intends for us. Our Gospel lesson foretold a bunch of bad things which will happen at the end. But for the Christian, all these bad things are actually signs that a good thing is coming. signs that a new world is about to come. "the end of this world" is not really an "ending," "the end of this world is actually a time of "beginning." The broken world, the world marred with sin, will be remade. It will be re-created anew. It will be restored to the way it should have been before it was marred by sin. Scripture makes the analogy between the suffering foretold about end of the world and the suffering of a woman in labor. Even though there is pain and struggle in the labor, she is not worried. She knows that they are not signs that something bad is happening to her. Rather she knows that they are signs that something good is about to happen. Nonetheless, the pains of the last days of this world will be signs that Jesus is coming in power and glory! As Isaiah promised [Isa 9:4]

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

For this reason, when these things begin to take place, Jesus tells us to stand up and lift up our heads, because our redemption is drawing near." Jesus says to stand up. Do not despair. Rejoice. Because something good is happening. And the great news is that that good has been offered to all people. Because Jesus died on the cross, a new heaven and Earth will appear. For all those who put their faith in Jesus their relationship with God is renewed. Because of Jesus we have been given the chance to be a part of this new world. Both the saints in Heaven and on Earth eagerly await the day on which God's justice will descend, when all injustices will be made right. The end of

the world is a “fixing of that which was broken”. The end of the world is in reality the beginning of God’s promised kingdom. The end of the world will be finally at time when all the suffering, the waiting, that God’s people have had to endure will be at an end. The new Earth and new Heaven, will be a perfect world where there will be no tears, no suffering, no loss. So as Christians, we do not fear the suffering and loss of the END of THIS world because “the end of this world” is not really an “ending,” “the end of this world is actually a time of “beginning.”

How long ago was the beginning of the Earth? Five billion years ago. Nope! We’re still looking forward to it. The peace of God be with you all. Amen.