

I don't know if you have heard or not, but this past week there was an election. In the week before, I was talking about the then upcoming election with a couple of people at work. And I was surprised that they had no idea that there was a national election coming up. I shouldn't be too surprised since they were college students, but with as much campaign propaganda that was floating around you would think that they would have seen or heard something. Especially just walking across campus.

Obviously, voting is incredibly important. But, what I want to talk about today, it doesn't matter who you voted for. It doesn't matter if they won or lost. I think that we all lost during this election. Some definitely lost more than others. And until all of the recounts and Georgia's run off, we will continue to lose.

I'm saying that we all lost because of the negative ads that we had to endure. Ad after ad of nothing but negative statements and insults. Most of the ads were definitely unchristian and disappointing. We had to listen to how one candidate was going to use inappropriate sign language to various members of our elected officials. Another candidate mocked some of the issues that transgender or nonbinary individuals have to deal with on a daily basis.

They are supposed to represent the best of us. And yet everything that they did to get elected was not. In some cases, their behavior gets worse instead of better. And then the general population starts to behave negatively and poorly as well. We see worse and worse behavior and it becomes more acceptable to the population as a whole.

It would be easy for us to continue on and follow these behaviors. But, this isn't what we are taught that God wants for us. He doesn't want us to behave in these sinful ways. He has better expectations for us and gives us lessons on how to live to achieve eternal salvation.

In today's reading from Malachi God's message is relayed to us about what happens to the evil doers and those who follow God's teachings. The author tells us that the end is coming. A fire will burn and judge them. Those that do not live by God's teachings will be destroyed by the fire. But the righteous will be redeemed and lifted up on healing wings.

The Book of Malachi tells of God's prophecy about the end and destruction. He talks about our resurrection. This isn't a new or even a different idea presented in the Bible. From what we know, Malachi is a collection of sermons that were written around 543 BCE. By this time we have seen a number of other prophets discuss the end of days.

Malachi is a part of the Bible known as the Lesser Prophets. It is included with the books of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Zechariah. In fact some people think that it was actually originally part of Zechariah and split off since it appears to be written by various prophets and not just one. So Malachi, which means my messenger, was split off and became the last book of the Old Testament.

Jesus had spent a great amount of time studying the Hebrew Bible. And as we see in our reading from Luke, he talks about the same ends. He tells the people that their beautiful temple will be destroyed, war and famine will approach, there will be plagues and earthquakes.

We see all of this now. The war in the Ukraine. We had Covid. Now the bird flu is wiping out chicken and turkey populations. We continue to have drought conditions and produce less food each season. And a landmass hurricane is not something that happens on a regular basis.

But I think the most significant part of the gospel lesson is when he tells us, is that we will be persecuted for our beliefs. People will attack us and try to make us question our beliefs. Our friends and family will even turn on us.

A girl that I know has been having difficulties expressing her religiosity with her parents. She was raised Catholic, but doesn't follow their beliefs as much as she once did. They ask her what she believes. They question every aspect of her life. And in some cases, her family has turned on her and refuses to talk to her at all.

She asked me what she should say to them. She told me that she has planned what to say many times, but when it happens she freezes. I remind her about Luke 21:15. "For I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict." Jesus will tell us what to say when the time is right. I realize that is easier said than done.

At one of my old jobs, my boss would ridicule me about "my imaginary friend". Whenever I would talk to him about me needing Sundays off for church, he would make fun of God and Jesus and would insult every aspect of religion that he could. There were a couple of times that I tried to defend my beliefs and choices, but he would only berate me until I caved and worked because it was easier than dealing with him.

But, one day he started in on me. He was mocking "my invisible friend" and started turning on me. I instantly defended myself with an explanation that there had to be God because of his behavior. The argument wasn't very sound, but it was enough that he dropped it and didn't bring up God around me for a while.

I told her this story in the hopes that she would just let the Holy Spirit speak through her when the time came. I know personally, I can easily overthink a situation and I've worked on letting myself sit back and put my faith in God.

Jesus knows each of us individually. He sees what is in our hearts. He knows that we are both good and bad. And accepts us for all of our wrong doings and faults. He judges us and will lead us to the other side. The right and wrong are within us and allow us to truly find our own salvation.