In the Gospel lesson that we read earlier from Luke, Jesus and his disciples were visiting the temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps some of the disciples were there for the very first time, having grown up in the village or around the region of Galilee. As they were approaching the temple, the disciples paused to admire the splendor and the magnificence of the temple…how sturdy and glamorous it may look all around. However, Jesus told his disciples that none of these would last forever. One day this very same temple would be destroyed and crumbled, just like everything else. The earthly temple that we see before our eyes are just temporal, it may last a couple of hundred years at best, but eventually it too will crumble and fall. But God’s temple will last forever.

 Now obviously, Jesus was not only describing the physical temple but also alluding to his own imminent death, resurrection and his return. There would be a time to destroy and a time to rebuild, a time to suffer as well as a time to celebrate. But no matter what, Jesus made a promise that despite the trials and challenges ahead, he would return in power and glory to save them at the end. He encouraged them to stand firm no matter how difficult the trials and situations may become. Now many of his disciples may have no clues as to what Jesus was referring to, but eventually they would get it.

Jesus used this opportunity and turn it into a teaching moment concerning the End of Time. All earthly infrastructure will eventually be destroyed, but God’s kingdom will soon be established and is here to stay. So the questions on everyone’s mind were...when is “the End” going to come? What is going to happen when it does come? How will we know and how shall we prepare for that day? These disciples wanted to know everything, but Jesus wasn’t going to give it them so directly. He wanted them to take everything by faith, and trust according to God’s promises, God will surely deliver. The End is near, and we must be Prepared.

 Instead of laying out all the details for the disciples concerning the future End Time, Jesus offered his disciples a few warning signs and advices, potential pitfalls that they must be on the lookout for.

1) **Beware of false prophets**[[1]](#footnote-1);

2) **Do not be terrified by things that might happen**[[2]](#footnote-2);

3) **Be opened to the leading of the Holy Spirit as it speaks to you**[[3]](#footnote-3); and last but not least,

4) **Stand firm and hold your course**[[4]](#footnote-4) even when the trials of persecution become too unbearable. In a few other translations, this last verse was translated as **“by your endurance (or patience), you will gain your soul (or your life).”**

Now Jesus was telling the disciples these warning signs not because he wanted to scare them or to put fears in their lives, but instead it was quite the opposite. He wanted to place a sense of urgency upon his disciples, so this way they would not be caught off-guard. Instead of living in constant fears and worries about our future, we shall be encouraged through our mission, even through the darkest times. Stand firm and remain hopeful when the day Christ does return to re-establish God’s kingdom.

Jesus turned this encounter into a lesson of faith and hope about a kingdom that was here and not yet. Jesus calmed the disciples’ fears and reassured them that these were all part of God’s discourse of salvation for humanity. However, Jesus challenged us that we must take action and be on guard with what is to come. There will be long-suffering and even persecutions because of our faith, but we will not be abandoned and those who perish will not die in vain.

How long will all these sufferings take place, when will all these end? To be honest, no one can pin-point that for sure except God alone. There will be false prophets who would say glamorous things according to human standards but not God’s. There will be acts of terror, intimidations, and fears as perpetrated by these so called “false prophets” as they thrive upon our human emotions and fears.

We are not at peace (both internally and externally) as we should be, even if we have anchored our faith in Christ. Jesus assured them that as long as one places his or her trust in Him, there is nothing that anyone needs to be concerned of. There will be various kind of trials and tribulations, but at the end only God’s reign will triumph and only God’s will will be done.

Now this week has been a tumultuous week. Our country has been challenged regarding our fears and worries due to the unexpected outcome of the historic Presidential election. Many might still be wandering what had just happened and even refusing to accept the outcome. They have taken their anger and frustration onto the streets in protest and across other forms of media of expression. Some even questioned whether this was after all God’s will or judgment.

Many have expressed their fears and worries concerning what might happen under the new regime. Will certain groups of individuals be singled out and be discriminated against? There were many questions but a few answers regarding the new policies and positions on foreign relations, domestic and global economy, race relations and class divisions, certain political viewpoints and perspectives, whether one is liberal or conservative and all others that fall in between.

Despite many uncertainties, one thing we do know for sure is certain is that our country and its citizens are still very much divided and we are in desperate need of God’s grace and a Divine intervention of healing, reconciliation and love. Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with certain policies, or whoever is in power, the questions that we, as Christians, must ask ourselves ultimately are, **who are we here to serve on this earth? God or Caesars? Whose will do we ultimately follow and honor our allegiance to? It’s all about God and not humankind, as we pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”**

 Keep in mind that over 2,000 years ago, Jesus and his disciples were faced with the very same dilemma, as many of the Jews and other foreigners were also being subjugated by an oppressive political hierarchy that seems unjust, unfair or un-represented to the people.

Jesus was part of that political uprising in challenging the earthly authority and establishment. The people were not happy with the leadership of Rome also. They wanted Jesus – their long-awaited Messiah to be their next king who would rescue them from their earthly misery, bondage, and suffering. Even the disciples themselves were ready to crown Jesus as king. But No, No, No….Jesus wanted none of that! It’s a different kind of kingship that Jesus brings. That’s not what He was being sent to earth to do.  **Jesus’s mission was NOT to be the next King, but to be the Savior for humankind.**

The kingdom that Jesus was establishing was not a political one that he would conquer by military force or power. **His agendas or platforms were not focused upon temporary changes or unfulfilled promises, but he inspired ultimate transformation and repentance of one’s heart.**

In the midst of much human fears of uncertainties and anxieties looming over our future, Christ has once again reminded us that **our future is in God’s hand and not whoever is in power.**  **Our God is greater than whoever is our president. God remains a sovereign God who is in control of all things in life.** No matter what the outcomes, no matter how harsh the criticisms or how hopeless our situations may become, we shall let our faith dictate our lives…and not fears, knowing that in life or in death we belong to God. We shall place our ultimate hope and trust in God’s hand and not by any human authority or standards.

Some may ask, as Christians, what can we do? Seriously, what impact might we have in our society today. Remember, part of our calling invites us to be IN the world, as all of us are already doing, but not necessarily OF the world. Shall we get involved with the politic at all? Well, didn’t most of us go to the poll earlier this week? God does want us to honor our civic responsibilities, however, we must remember that our ultimate allegiance remains in God’s hand, who reigns supreme over all land, people and principalities, as we sang earlier in our opening hymn “***Jesus Shall Reign Wherever the Sun***.”

Our country is desperately in need of God’s grace and mercy. It is not up to any one of us to save this country but it’s totally up to God to take care of God’s own business and people. But there is something that you and I must do – we must pray! We must pray fervently upon God’s mercy and deliverance of healing upon God’s people. We must pray for the Spirit of unity and that God’s will be manifested ultimately, on earth as it is in heaven. We must pray that God’s peace shall reign and triumph over any human hatreds, bigotry, hostilities, and fears. We must pray that our earthly leaders (not just the US President, but all other global leaders) be obedient and submissive to the authority and the will of God. We must pray that they may pursue God’s purpose and not their own.

1 John chapter 4 tells us, ***“there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”*** In times like these, when love seems hard to come by when there is much hatred and fear concerning our future. Perhaps love is all we must salvage in order to overcome our fears. We can and we must turn back to God and place our ultimate trust in God who keeps us in the spirit of **cooperation**, **reconciliation** and **mutual forbearance**.

In closing, we are reminded by the 2nd passage that we read earlier…from Paul’s letter of encouragement to the early church in Colossus. Many of the early Christians were facing trails, persecutions and hardships because of their faith. Paul affirmed his allegiance and commitment of who Christ is to him, regardless of what earthly rule and power that we might be fallen under, regardless of what trials, challenges, and even persecutions that we may face each day, our ultimate purpose of worship and allegiance belong to Christ and Christ alone. Christ is the head of the body, the church. He is the King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, on earth as it is in heaven.

*“May we be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may we be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.[[5]](#footnote-5)* In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 2:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 2:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 2:14* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 2:19* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Colossians 1:11-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)