

"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. "It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen. Revelation 22,12-21 NRSV

In the last few weeks in our Sunday readings we have been having lessons from the Revelation of St. John. It is perhaps the most difficult book in the bible to understand because of all of its imagery, which unfortunately was much more recognizable to its' first hearers than to us today. It also envisions some rather horrific events to take place on humankind as signs that the final judgment is here.

Over the years this book has probably been misinterpreted many times not just by those you might expect but by those whose faith was outstanding and strong. Where they especially failed was their feeling that they could prepare for the last judgment by figuring out the day. An early Christian father named Ignatius as well as Martin Luther and Christopher Columbus all predicted wrongly about the Lord's return. While Jesus always emphasized that the date was not known, it hasn't stopped people even today winding up having "egg on their face" saying they have figured out the date.

So here we are with this book in scripture, and with all its challenges you might be asking "What is the point of reading it". While there are many, the main point I made on Sunday was that it means even after the most horrific events, God is still in charge just as God was in the beginning; God will be in the ending. The ending will be a restoration of God's intent at the beginning; humankind in unbroken fellowship with God.

That is the challenge for Christians in this day and age. To believe and trust despite what they see in society, world events, and culture. God is still in charge.

But if you've ever sung "Blessed Assurance" from our blue "With One Voice", you'd never know it. Another hymn of hers that speaks to her total trust in God is "All The Way My Savior Leads me". The first verse and chorus go like this:

*"All the way my savior leads me, what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort who by faith in him to dwell,
For I know what ever betide me Jesus doeth all things well,
For I know what ever betide me Jesus doeth all things well."*

May that be our trust until our Lord comes again.

Pr. John Van Haneghan