

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ...May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17, 23-24.

Dear Christian friends,

November in the Church year is bookmarked by two significant events: All Saints Day and Christ the King Sunday. The month opens with that remembrance of those Christians who lived exemplifying the very Spirit of Christ Jesus in their earthly lives. It closes with the declaration of that event to which all Christians live in hope: Christ Jesus bringing his eternal reign to us in the close of all time. Each celebration has its beginning in God’s activity toward us through Jesus as the Christ.

Anyone who follows even a modest attention to the events of the world cannot help but feel discouraged. This past month we are witness once again as the conflict in Israel and Palestine rises. Another act of savagery by one group of humans against another is unfolding. The incidents of mass shootings recur in the United States. One does not need to think hard or deeply to understand that the human species will never attain ultimate peace. We seem to demonstrate our barbaric nature too poignantly.

The current state of world affairs seems to verify the truth about our human nature. Many contemporary Christian progressives suggest that we humans bring the Kingdom of God into reality. This concept was also a prevailing predominately Protestant theological perspective a century ago. The Christian theologian H. Richard Niebuhr wrote about the main thrust of such an idea, wanting to challenge that teaching. “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross.”¹ That is the progressive concept of salvation. Still each new generation seems to bring out the Sin in human beings rather than their righteousness.

Baptized people have been united into the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus by God’s holy work. God acts to bring forth a new creation in each and every baptized person. God frees us from our bondage to sin, that we might live a new way in the world. This is the life that those saints we remember lived. The presence of God’s Holy Spirit with each baptized person gives them encouragement, discernment and a sense of the holiness of God with them. The Holy Spirit motivates one in the love of Christ toward good works. While we live in this interim time, in spite of all the disheartening events in the world, we are the Body of Christ that acts courageously and with faith for the glory of God the Father.

It is Christ Jesus who comes in the final judgment to bring all time to an end. It is Christ Jesus who brings in the full and true Kingdom of God for all creation. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17. God is acting for our well-being.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.

¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers) © 1937. P. 193