

Second Hand Preacher

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 16, 2014

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

St. Paul tells us, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." This always struck me as a bit strange having our Lord and Savior being compared to a thief. I often wonder if, because one had to be careful about who you talked to about the Christ for fear of persecution, that "thief" type language was being used. Think how fortunate we are to live in a society where we have the freedom to profess our faith openly. Think of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East who do not always share in these great conditions. The media may not always like us but we can still assemble and have most of our religious liberties.

St. Paul is telling the Christians in Thessalonica that the end is near. They realize it is time for them to ready themselves. Obviously the end as I believe Paul was talking about, has not come yet. Over the centuries this "end" has been predicted by many. There are plenty of people who look at how things are going and say the end is near. What I take comfort in is that none of us knows. I really don't want to know the end of the world or the end of my life. While I have great sympathy for the woman in Oregon who took her own life because of a grave brain cancer, I do believe she was misguided. She perhaps short circuited the eternal plan by doing it her way. Who knows what might have happened; would the experts be wrong? Was she supposed to help and influence people while she was sick? Did she miss the chance to have redemptive suffering? The answer is we don't know; only God knows. Paul knew this and he wanted the followers of Jesus to be ready.

How were they going to get ready? I believe it is by living a life of goodness, making our time here lead us to life eternal. As Paul writes we need to be "sober and alert." When I think of sober, I think of the wonderful work that has been done through the 12 Steps of AA. How one must realize they have difficulties managing life and there is a need for something greater than themselves. We are by definition weak and all of us have something that gets in the way of our relationship with that higher power who Christians call a Triune God. We first need to surrender our will to this God and this is not a one-time event. Next we need to really work on ourselves by being honest and recognize those points in our lives we have done wrong. Then we need to share them with another person. We, as Catholics, have the opportunity to do this on a regular basis with the sacrament of reconciliation. Then we look at our defects and ask them to be removed. We look at who we have harmed and make amends where we can. We try to keep applying these things in our daily lives and spend time in prayer and meditation. Finally, we share our lives with those in need of the same type of healing that hopefully happens to us as a result of the steps.

St. Paul wanted to get the Thessalonians ready, but the question is are we ready?