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I take my hat off to no one in the dismay — not as persons, but as candidates for President — that I felt for the two major party candidates for that office, and the feeling was strong enough that I voted for a third party candidate. Still, while I had originally intended *not* to watch the election returns on television, I sat up until 1:15 or whenever it was that Donald Trump gave his short and surprisingly appropriate comments.

And the sun came up on Wednesday morning, or, to be more accurate, the earth kept spinning on its axis, as it would have done had Hilary Clinton been the winner.

Yet despite adult behavior by both these candidates -- both were gracious and honorable in their post-election comments -- and by President Obama, hysteria was not ended; an early Wednesday afternoon email I received had a link to a "New Yorker Magazine" article, "An American Tragedy," that suggests the apocalypse is upon us; a Washington Post column by Garrison Keilor reeked of such condescension, that he might be from Minnesota, but I question that he was Lutheran. And of course there have been protests, which show a lack of appreciation for the rule of law.

And the sun came up, and the sun set, and, well, the earth is still spinning. There has been no *apocalypse*.

Maybe the reason that so many impart so much importance to politics is captured by a few "Dilbert" cartoons of this past week. I think most are familiar with "Dilbert," the fictional engineer in a technology company. This past week, Dilbert created a drone into which he put a "soul" to provide values for non-believers; the drone would follow the non-believer and provide guidance about what is good and what is not — although he expressed it differently, as guidance about not acting like a jerk.

And so perhaps to a person of no-faith but a heightened dependence on politics, politics can produce an apocalypse — but the idea of an apocalypse is one we get from the Bible, and it is far removed from something that politics could bring about.

And while it might normally be associated with the Book of Revelation and four horsemen, the idea appears in our Gospel reading today -- or, I should say, a lead into the idea of an apocalypse, *the Apocalypse*, appears. I am not sure why on this penultimate -- love that word, -- I am not sure why on this next-to-the-last Sunday of the Church year we read this passage, but in verses that follow what we read, Jesus goes on to say:

20 "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; 22 for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. 23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; 24 they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken

away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Allow me to indulge in a bit of background that I think is relevant to what we have read. Jesus is speaking of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the date when he is speaking is, sort of as best we can guess, 29 AD or so. In 67 AD, a group of Jews staged a revolt against Roman rule, and in 70 AD, the Romans prevailed; Jerusalem was badly damaged and the Temple largely destroyed. From a Jewish perspective, this was, if not the end of the world, a horrible time, much like the 589-587 BC similar events at the hand of the Babylonians. In our reading, Jesus appears to be forecasting this event -- and it is hard to say whether the writer of Luke, who basically took this passage from the writer of Mark, neither of whom would have been present, -- adds his own guess as to what Jesus might have said, but Luke was almost certainly written after 70 AD, *after* the Romans put down that revolt, and destroyed the Temple.

In context, Jesus' first words are effectively a pep talk that though this destruction of the Temple would happen, it would not herald the time for his return -- for the Apocalypse; his followers are told they will face persecution and basically told to persevere through it, that he will give them -- through the Holy Spirit -- words to say, but it will not mark the end time, the apocalypse, the time when he would return.

Now, the Gospels were not written as history nor biography; they were written to persuade that Jesus was the anointed, the Son of God. If we accept this, there is a purpose served by the Gospel writers' telling this story: to establish that Jesus is credible in what is normally considered, though it is not biblically the case, the role of a prophet, that of *foretelling events*. If forty years before the event, Jesus was able to forecast the Romans' destruction of the Temple, maybe you doubters, *maybe* we, should pay attention to what he is now going to say -- or more accurately, to what he said next, which is:

25 "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 *Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory.* 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because *your redemption is drawing near.*" 29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 *Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.* 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." 37 Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. 38 And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple."

Jesus was now speaking not of wars and revolutions, but of cosmic events and "the roaring of the sea and the waves," and what they foretold was not the destruction of the Temple, but his coming again: "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" -- an almost direct quotation from the second century before Christ apocalyptic prophet Daniel -- and "your redemption is drawing near," and "*Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.*"

There is a big question as to whether the writer of Luke indeed was expecting that "this generation will not pass away until all has taken place"; the scholar I most frequently consult on Luke does not quite buy that idea. But we know that the apostle Paul, though by the time the Gospel of Luke is written, Paul had been dead 6-15 years, the apostle Paul at least originally had expectation of Jesus' imminent return; indeed, it is the major question he addresses in the first written book in the New Testament, which is not a version of the Gospel, but 1 Thessalonians.

But that the future most expected and anticipated by early Christians was the coming again of Jesus is certain, and Jesus basically says, "some wild things will happen, wars and earthquakes and the like, *but persevere*," and persevere why? Well, I think it is because persevering will allow Luke's audience to experience -- with positive anticipation-- that which we properly call, "the Apocalypse."

Suffering in order to survive until Jesus' coming again seems a different anticipation than expecting that less than four years of a Presidency heralds the end of the world -- and heck, there is something odd about anticipating the end of a world in which for many there is no anticipation of Jesus' coming, "many" meaning those without faith who perhaps have need of Dilbert's drones. The future is not what, if not "it used to be," what "it was *expected* to be" by early Christians, but maybe they, having experienced the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, should be allowed to teach us a bit of perspective on worldly events.

We can be so blinded by concerns, not just political, but social, material, that we lose sight of what is important; it is that simple. None of us is immune from that, but as Christians, especially as Christians who aspire to be part of the earthly body of Christ, His Church, we can become so bogged down in the here and now that we do not even contemplate the future, let alone with hope anticipate it. Jesus said,

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness *and the worries of this life*,"

Are we so weighed down that we have lost hope in the future God has planned for us? In our lifetimes, the way we would envision our earthly futures has changed continually. In 1940, some of you were alive then, did anyone anticipate average people hopping on an airplane without propellers and flying to Europe? To Chicago? In 1980 -- heck, in 1990, -- did anyone envision smart phones dominating our social behavior? In 1970, did anyone anticipate the Presbyterian -- or Methodist or Lutheran or Episcopal --

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denomination's membership's declining by almost two-thirds? Individual congregations disappearing?
Boarded up churches?

Our expectations of the earthly future will certainly change with next version of the iPhone, should we be privileged to live another few years, but part of our expectation of the future should never change: the anticipation of Jesus' return -- which may really mean our being individually reunited with him, not that end of the world Luke's audience anticipated, -- so even His return may not be *apocalyptic*. Allow me to repeat that: *we do not need to wait for the apocalypse for Jesus to come to us; he is here for us now.*

So far as the world in which we live, each year the future will look a bit different from what it looked to us a year or two earlier. Part of that will be technological, part of it will be social, part of it may even be political, *but -- with God's help -- it, too, will not be apocalyptic.*

Let us put things in perspective and persevere. For some of you, Donald Trump is the current savior figure for the USA; for others, he is the devil himself. Both are gross exaggerations that should only characterize those who need a drone for a soul. For those with souls, differences might exist in whether one anticipates celebrating or tolerating, but this political age, too, shall pass. Jesus would say that no election, no worldly event, can foretell the end time --although he might not have contemplated the Cubs' winning the World Series. But this earth is not the kingdom of God; that future is still out there, *unchanged.*

Persevere -- and give thanks to God for the assurance of a never-ending, never changed future with him because of Jesus Christ.

Amen.