

Thirty-third Sunday – November 15, 2015

May 21, 2011. Remember that date? That was when the world was going to end – at least according to a man named Harold Camping. Remember him? He was the one who convinced millions of folks to send him their dollars so they could be relieved of any financial burdens before the end times. (I kept my hands tightly closed on my wallet!)

Needless to say, Harold Camping was wrong. In fact he had been wrong before on several occasions: three times in 1994, and once more in 1995. As one writer opined: “He wasn’t the only one to be wrong about his prediction of the end of the world. He just did it with the greatest number of billboards and RVs.”

These sorts of predictions go way back in time. As early as the year 90 AD, Bishop Clement of Rome predicted it would soon happen. It was supposed to happen in 365, then in 400, then in 968, and in the year 2000, with a crash known as Y2K.

About the end times, there is only one thing worth remembering. As it says in the gospel: “about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” The purpose of this gospel passage then and now is the same: we have hope, and we know that the world’s final destination is ultimately in the boundless mercy of God.

Still, today’s sobering gospel does remind me that my life has limits. We know that continually thinking about one’s death is unhealthy, but never doing so is foolish. If the world ends for me when I die, then I should be examining my life right now, asking questions like these:

Am I angry with anyone, or they with me? It seems like a small thing, but what else do people have except each other. If the moon fell out of the sky, I would wonder if I had shown some light in a darkened place, or at least allowed some light into my darkened mind and heart. If the stars no longer shone in the heavens, I would wonder if I had added any beauty or truth or goodness to the earth. Nothing grandiose, mind you, since I can only return what I was given. But, did I once do something good just because it was good?

My last piece of wondering is this: did I align myself with God’s designs – or did I try to do it differently, my way? Have I admitted that I am not the measure of all things – that there is Someone above and way beyond me.

What will happen when the Son of Man finally comes for me and for the world? We honestly don’t know. What we do know is that God is faithful and true and rich in mercy. We know too that goodness will never be overcome by evil and that God’s reign will prevail no matter what.