APOCALPYSE

Many claim that these are apocalyptic end of times. Even some of politicians are using the word "apocalyptic" to describe war and violence, killing in the name of religion and justifying it. I wonder...

Most major religions have their own theories and beliefs on the topic, where the end is referred to in different ways: Armageddon means final conflict, and the word traces its root to the Hebrew Har Megiddon referring to the "Mount of Megiddo," an ancient, strategically positioned city in central Israel/Palestine and a site of important battles and conflict.The word Apocalypse means revelation, disclosure, implying that at the end all things will be revealed. The Last judgment is when all will be judged receiving justice according to their works, restoring balance. The second coming of Jesus is a uniquely Christian reference to "the end."

Apocalypse was an issue even during Jesus' time on earth. In Matthew when Jesus responds to the disciples as they point to the temple, and says, "You see all these? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down," the disciples ask, "When will this be, and what will be the sign of the end of the age?" Jesus answers, "Beware that no one leads you astray. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... There will be famines and earthquakes... The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven... They will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory..."

Many insist that these words are about the end of times. But a deeper look reveals that Jesus was speaking about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. There was so much tension and turmoil at the time between Romans and Jews in Jerusalem, a city segregated by class, race, and faith, divided between rich and poor, master and slave, Jew and gentile. It was not hard to imagine that a war was on its way, that the temple would be destroyed and not a stone would be left on top of another.

Many of the scriptural references to "the end" are about the Roman Empire which was occupying the land at the time. Those references assure the followers of Jesus, and Jews, that the empire is not Lord, God is. Therefore, do not despair. Take heart. Have courage. And trust that God is Lord, that God is in charge. Faith has always held that conviction at heart, embracing the God of Christmas, Resurrection and Pentecost who can be trusted for this God makes all things new. Faith has never been about the end but about the new beginning. Even the last chapter of the book of Revelation does not end with "the end," but with a "new heaven and a new earth," a new beginning. Hence, we are a people who "never put a period where God has placed a comma!" Sound familiar?

I have come to think that apocalypses happen every day when we uncover truths, when we discover the new, when we find insight, and when the hidden is revealed to us. In everyday living, it is not easy to see the painful and the difficult. We'd much rather see only that which does not cause us pain or anxiety. Yet the world often reveals some uncomfortable truths to us – illness, poverty, inequality, injustice, oppression, suffering, abuse of power, loss, and more.

Perhaps instead of waiting for a future apocalypse, we can embrace apocalypse now so we can witness the realities of our world and allow them to reveal new insight, helping us discover the way of the new heaven and the new earth where Love is Lord and Grace is Sovereign.

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