

## **THE MESSAGE for May 22, 2011**

**1 Peter 2:1-10**

*Future Church... Our Proclamation*

**The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller**

Well I suppose we all missed it or we wouldn't be here this morning. Yesterday was supposed to be the end of the world according to a Doomsday Christian group in California whose mission was to get their message out through "Project Caravan." "The end of the world is almost here," Their message proclaimed on radio stations, billboards, leaflets and website. "The Bible guarantees it." They said.

"Five months of natural disaster will commence on May 21, 2011 (yesterday) and earthquakes will cause widespread death and destruction among nonbelievers, while the believers will be saved from damnation and punishment as Jesus comes and takes them directly to heaven," so said their leader and preacher Harold Camping. He predicted that 200 million people or 3 percent of the world's current population would be saved and raptured into heaven. That was supposed to happen yesterday. I guess we missed it.

Harold Camping is the founder of Family Radio, an independent ministry that has broadcast his prediction around the world. He said there would be a huge earthquake yesterday "that would make the earthquake in Japan seem like a Sunday School picnic."

He based his proclamation on decades of studying the Bible and his belief that the Noah's Ark flood happened in the year 4990 BC. He claimed that since 2 Peter 3:8 says that one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day to God, there would be seven thousand years between Noah's flood and the end of the world. The seven days come from Noah having seven days to warn people about the coming disaster, so Harold proclaimed there would be seven days, or 7,000 years, between Noah's flood and the destruction of earth. So 4990 plus 2011, minus one because there was no year '0', equals 7,000 years.

Of course, Harold predicted the end of the world was supposed to happen in 1994. He said that his prediction were off then. I guess he was off once again. I guess he also failed to read in Matthew 24 where Jesus says that no one except the Father knows when the end of the world will come, not even Jesus or the angels know. If Jesus and the angels don't even know who does Harold Camping think he is?

As Lutheran believers we know that setting a date for the end of world is foolishness and contrary to the Bible. Doing so places that person above God. Many people have proclaimed such doomsday scenarios that never happened. I'm sure there will be many more.

As I thought about all of this... 2 questions came to mind for me.

**Question #1: How can one person influence so many people with the proclamation of fear?**

Fear is a great motivator. One guy got so caught up in this doomsday proclamation that he spent \$120,000 of his retirement savings to get the doomsday message out. I wonder how he feels about that now.

We proclaim that Jesus will come again. It could be in the next five seconds or in the next 500 years or somewhere in between. Jesus' return should not be something we fear but welcome. Come Lord Jesus. Chances are Jesus will come again but we won't even know that he is in our midst. The Bible says something about his coming when we least expect it...

### **Question #2: Are you motivated by fear or by faith?**

Faith is what our reading from 1 Peter is all about for today. We are to build our lives on the faith that is ours in Christ Jesus our Rock. And we are to be his living stones. I love the images and the message in this text. Listen to our reading from 1 Peter 2:1-10 (*Read Text*)

You and I are here today because we have tasted the Lord's goodness in some way. And so we live by faith not by fear. Living by faith means we live our lives in a way that reflects three things Peter proclaims:

First: We rid our lives of evil...

Second: We crave the good...

Third: We grow spiritually...

#### **First: We rid our lives of evil...**

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (Verse 1)*

Funny Story: A grouchy husband came to breakfast one morning. His wife had prepared two eggs - one fried and one scrambled. He said, "Yep, just like I thought, you've done it again." "Now what's wrong?" she asked. He replied, "As usual, you fried the wrong egg."

It could be that she married the wrong egg! So often, in our relationships we are quick to point out the wrong in others. We may be completely blind to our own shortcomings, but we can see the errors of others so easily and we are quick to point them out. We're all guilty of this in one way or another. And yet, if we go around pointing out the wrong in others, there may not be many others around us very long.

My mother used to tell me – "Rob, if you worry about yourself and do what you need to do, you'll have enough to do." Now that I have children of my own – I truly appreciate those words and I use them with my children.

We are human and that means there are certain things that need to be removed, ridden from our lives. Got any bad habits that you need to get rid of? Any malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander? Truth be told, we all do.

And since we have tasted the goodness of the Lord, we willingly work on cleaning up our own lives, ridding our lives of those things. There is nothing like the feeling of a clean house – or a clean life – and living accordingly. What do you need to clean-up in your life?

### **Second, we crave the good.**

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (Verses 2 and 3)*

Another funny story: Bill, a retired farmer, moved to a town where he was the only Lutheran and everyone else was Catholics. That was okay, but the neighbors had a problem with his barbecuing beef every Friday. Since they couldn't eat meat on Friday, the tempting aroma was getting the best of them.

Hoping they could do something to stop this, the neighbors got together and went over to talk to Bill. "Bill," they said, "since you are the only Lutheran in town and there's not a Lutheran church for miles around, we think you should join our church and become a Catholic." Bill thought about it for a minute and decided they were probably right. Bill talked to the priest, and they arranged it.

The big day came and the priest had Bill kneel. He put his hand on Bill's head and said, "Bill, you were born a Lutheran, you were raised a Lutheran, and now," he said as he sprinkled some incense over Bill's head, "now you are a Catholic!"

Bill was happy and the neighbors were happy. But the following Friday evening at supper time, there was again the aroma of grilled beef coming from Bill's yard. The neighbors went to talk to him about this and as they approached the fence, they heard Bill saying to the steak: "You were born a beef, you were raised a beef," and as he sprinkled seasonings over the meat he said, "and NOW you are a FISH!"

Bill was bound and determined that nothing was going to stop him from satisfying his craving. He was going to eat beef no matter what! What do you crave? Beef, potato chips, ice cream, chocolate? The truth is there is nothing wrong with eating any of these in moderation. God created everything to be enjoyed in moderation.

Food cravings are a pretty normal part of our lives. We develop a taste for things. We may say, "I'm hungry for this or that..." And we go get it, if it's possible. What has happened to that kind of craving for spiritual things? Do we still have it? And if we don't, how can we get it?

I've found that reading the Bible makes me crave it all the more. I've found that time spent with Jesus is time well spent and it makes me crave a relationship with him all the more.

God has created in us a spiritual desire to worship and therefore we will worship anything. God has a desire that we will worship him and him alone, the creator of everything. Do you know that you have a natural craving to be in a relationship with our Creator by way of Christ Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit? We crave the goodness of God. What are you doing to help satisfy that craving?

### **Third we grow spiritually...**

Dr. Scott Peck, the author of the book, "The Road Less Traveled," spent a great amount of time working with patients in a psychiatric hospital. He discovered an almost universal trend that when there is a lack of interest or no desire to ask questions or no desire to seek the new and grow; "no taste for mystery" as he puts it. He discovered apathy. And if he can cultivate in people a willingness to want to search and grow, then there is some hope. But if not, he sees little hope.

Apparently, there must be a desire to grow in order to make progress in life. This is true for all of us. We need to grow up in Christ but if the desire isn't present, not much can be done about it. We'll become just a bunch of whining spiritual babies without a desire to grow.

Growth is a natural part of growing up! Amber and I want our children to grow up in so many ways especially spiritually and so we foster an environment for that to happen. It's our responsibility as parents – to help our children grow up. If we want our children to be spiritual then we need to be spiritual. If we want them to go to church then we need to go to church. If we want them to grow spiritually then we need to be growing spiritually.

You and I are here today because we have tasted the Lord's goodness in some way. And so we live by faith not by fear. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, living stones, God's own possession. We have tasted the goodness of the Lord and so we proclaim the goodness of him who calls us out of darkness into the light. We have received God's mercy.

As people of God then; it's not doomsday we live for it's the Lord's Day we live for and everyday is the Lord's Day. So may we live every day by faith not fear. That's our proclamation. That's our future. Amen.