

Scripture Reflection for Living Faith

Tuesday, November 26, 2002

Tuesday of the 34th Week in Ordinary Time

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Rev. 14:14-19, Ps. 96:10,11-12, 13, Lk. 21:5-11

“...many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and ‘The time has come.’ Do not follow them! .” Lk. 21:8

There can be some dark comfort in thinking that these are the end times, that things are getting so bad that surely God will soon give up on human freedom and come fix the world. And periodically, people have taken this comfort, abandoned their homes to sit on hillsides or lie under purple cloths waiting for the end.

Yet Jesus warns us not to be misled, not to follow those who claim to be him, who claim, “The time is at hand!” Instead, Jesus tells his followers not to fear but to know that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. With two millennia of wars, plagues, natural disasters and persecutions between us and the time of Jesus, maybe we have to rethink what he might have meant about such things being signs that the Kingdom is “near.” Perhaps Jesus was speaking of the human paradox that the greatest courage, endurance, generosity and love are most often seen in the times of greatest danger, hopelessness, poverty and evil. Perhaps Jesus meant that the Kingdom of God is as near as love in the face of hatred, as generosity in the face of poverty. In this view, the words we’ll read on Friday are also affirmed because not a single generation of humanity has passed away without some who discover this Kingdom within themselves and invite the rest of us with their compassion.