

Column

Hope in a world of despair, joy in a world of sorrow, peace in a world of turmoil . . . and it shown in their faces. This is how the maker of a documentary, apparently not a believer, summarized what he observed at a Christian gathering he attended.

He noted that their belief caused them to almost beam. Not only did it show in their faces, it gave strength in their lives. One woman interviewed reinforced this observation when she said: “With all the troubles and strife going on in our country and in the world at large, we can find an answer to it. And without this belief, I don’t know how we could cope.”

As I watched this documentary, I could not help but think what a difference it would make if the same could be said of each one of Jesus’ followers. To paraphrase a popular song, “They’ll know we are Christians by our love . . . and our faces!”

Why should it not be so? This film, as I already mentioned, was done a few years ago, but the witness highlighted here is needed now more than ever. As I write, warfare in the Middle East which began Oct. 7, following a rampage in which militants from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic extremist groups launched attacks that killed more than 1,400 Israelis and took more than 240 hostages, continues. Meanwhile, warfare between Russia and Ukraine continues unabated with no show of a resolution in sight.

Closer to home, economic concerns continue in the United States. One of the most worrying trends is the lack of affordable housing for people with low and moderate incomes. What will America look like in 20 years? Is the American dream dead? Beyond our own shores, what will the world be like two decades from now?

At such a time as this, those who name Christ's name have an advantage, a reason for hope, a place of peace in a storm. After all, they have their Lord's own words saying: "Be not anxious (Matthew 6:34)" and "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

They have looked in the back of the book and found that God wins. The kingdoms of this world – the kingdom of sin, Satan and death – are to be overcome and brought into submission.

In the sacred pages, there is no promise that Christians will be free from suffering in the present age. Far from it, such suffering is predicted and should be expected. The saints from the death and resurrection of Jesus onward have experienced it in real time. The good news is that victory in the end is assured. Christ's call is: Take up your cross and follow me.

The people highlighted in the documentary, those whose faces shown say: It can be done. Whatever is going on around us, we can be witnesses and light in the world. Let all the world hear – God is in control!

O GOD, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church of Blue Ridge.