

Column – finding peace and joy in a trouble world

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 was covering.

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 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? The film I referenced was done a few years ago, but the witness highlighted in it is needed now more than ever. As I write, there has been yet another attempt to assassinate the President of the United States, while the rogue nation of Iran continues to resist peace initiatives.

Closer to home, gasoline prices continue high and a partial government shutdown remains in place. Meanwhile, in the Houses of Congress, there seems more rhetoric than meaningful action.

What will America look like in 20 years? What will the world be like two decades from now? All of which to say, there is plenty of reason for worry.

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.

For followers of Jesus, peace and joy is not just something to be clutched to one's breast and held onto. Rather may they be seen in our FACES.

O LORD, from whom all good things do come; Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that are good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Easter) Book of Common Prayer)

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