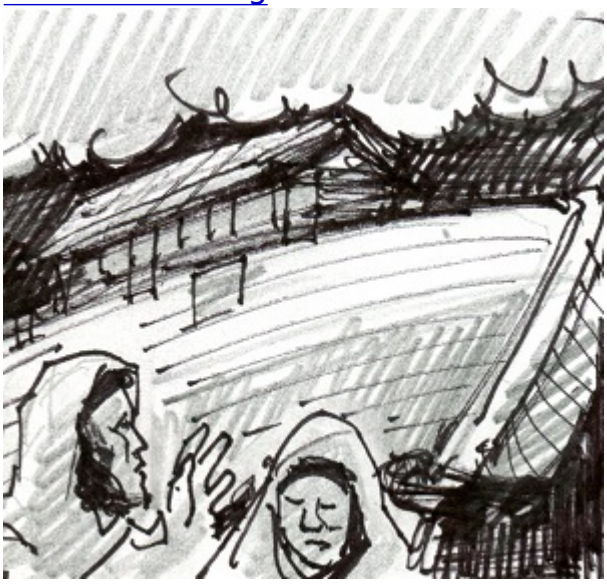
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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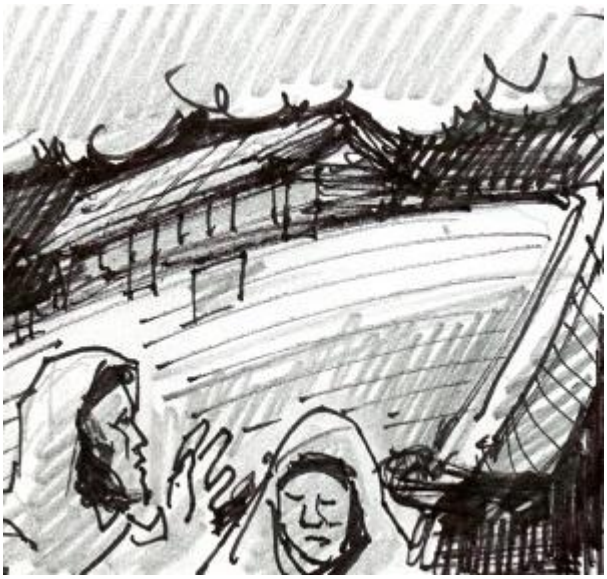

“Where the body is, there also will the vultures gather” (Luke 17:37)

2 John 4-9: Luke 17:26-37

The strange quote at the end of today’s Gospel could be another way to say the obvious, that a corpse attracts vultures, or it could be a reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem if you substitute “eagles” for vultures. The key to understanding these apocalyptic portions of the New Testament is that Jesus’ original sayings are being applied to later events.

Jesus no doubt used common sayings to urge his followers to “read the signs of times,” itself a familiar adage. He told them to pay attention to events in the same way they predicted the weather. He told them to stay awake and alert as if expecting their master’s return from a trip or if warned that a thief might break in at night. The message was clear. Events were coming to a climax in Jesus’ ministry. Pay attention and be prepared!

In today’s Gospel, Jesus reviews past moments when being prepared was crucial. While Noah prepared for the flood, people went about their daily business until it was too late. In the time of Lot, the people of Sodom ignored the warnings and were destroyed by fire and brimstone. So will it be, Jesus says, when the “Son of Man” is revealed.

This mysterious figure from the Book of Daniel has been interpreted as an apocalyptic messenger at the end of the world or as the original Primordial Man who reflects God’s intentions when the world was created. Applied to Jesus, the Son of

Man is the Christ, the Incarnatie Word and our Savior, who surprises us by appearing in history as God's Suffering Servant who redeems the world by his death. The prophetic imagery in these passages shows the early church anticipating the Second Coming in the light of the crises happening all around it.

For us, such readings build anticipation and tension as we come to the end of the Church Year. Add to these themes the advancing darkness of winter (in the northern hemisphere) and the uncertainties of the pandemic and our political chaos. We are pressed into a prayerful frame of mind about how to interpret the “signs of the times” here and now. Events are inviting us to experience the Liturgy as it is intended to work, telling us to be alert to God’s activity in the world.

While some seek comfort in distractions or find a semblance of control by immersion in media coverage, our faith also draws us into the timeless hope that see’s God’s hand in history. As members of a community of pilgrims that has ridden out storms and faced difficult changes before, we do what our ancestors have done when facing uncertainty. We go forward through one season to the next, confront trouble with courage, then look ahead to Advent, where new life is our focus and cause for celebration. In the midst of life’s perennial questions, something wonderful is about to happen.

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