24th Sunday After Trinity
Rolling Meadows - 1964

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 24: 9-14 (RSV) Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.

SIGNS OF THE END

It is later than we think. Time is running out. Rapidly and resolutely, history is marching on. All the signs point to one thing - the end of the world is near at hand. People don't like to hear this, of course. Living in a dream world of their own making, the vast majority of people in our time live, or would like to live, as pampered guests in a hotel. If they think of God at all, they look upon Him as a glorified bellboy - Someone nice to have around if ever they should have need of Him, to run their errands for them, and give them room service when they request it. Beyond that they hang up the Do Not Disturb sign on the door of their lives, hoping only that they will be let alone. The impending end of all things that we now hold dear and the impending judgment of God are disturbing thoughts. Some of you may hold it against me that I have brought it up. You don't like to be disturbed. You don't want to listen to a prophet of gloom and doom.

You would much rather listen to the false prophets of the world, who talk in glowing terms about the goodness of man - about a coming Utopia - where man has at last achieved the stature of god himself - where there is peace and prosperity, and all are free to live their own lives in their own way - where there is no sin and no God to whom we must give an account. Look at what modern man has accomplished! That prophetic genius of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci, day-dreamed of a machine which would give man wings and enable him to fly. Science fiction created the fantastic world of Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, and interplanetary space travel. Jules Verne brought forth out of his imagination a realm 20,000 leagues under the sea. The dreamworld of yesterday has come into being. It is even now being replaced. Science fiction has turned out to be no fiction at all. Today's scientists are both probing far out into space and penetrating deep into the earth's interior. Someone has estimated that the whole body of human knowledge regarding the world in which we live

has doubled in the past 15 years. Man has power. He is mightier than Thor with his hammer. His rockets ride their shafts into the heavens, and his atomic gadgets cause proud cities to tremble.

But he is still man! - able to take the city but unable to control his own spirit. Not only our dreams, but also our nightmares are coming true. A sense of impending tragedy lies like a soggy blanket over the world. Are we really risin to angelic heights, or are we heading into the abyss at a devilish rate? Our whole world, fleeing from God, and the truth of God, and the Word of God, seems to be in the unhappy position of the airplane pilot who, when asked by one of his passengers, Where are we? replied, At the moment we are lost, but we are making good time. The noted humanist, Joseph Woodkrutch, in his book Human Nature and Human Conduct, has described our situation this way: Progress is strangely mixed up with threats, and the release of atomic energy is, among many 'firsts', the first technological triumph widely regarded as possibly, all things considered, a misfortune... The suspicion that man may at last have become too smart for his own good is nervously entertained in some very respectable quarters. Observing one of those bright and exploding stars called Nova in the night sky, a famous American astronomer is said to have remarked with resignation, 'Well, there goes another place where they found out how to do it.'

People are nervous and uneasy. Their fear, guilt, and anxiety have not been relieved or removed by the multiplication of material goods. Our own nation, for example, has the best record in welfare programs which provide physically for the sick, the orphans, the aged, and the poor. At the same time it has the worst record in delinquency, drunkenness, insanity, and suicide. Those who have eyes to see are well aware of the fact that we are even now living in the time of tribulation and distress of which our Lord spoke: And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. This is our world, all right! We live in an era of discord, mutual distrust, and lack

communication in spite of the greatest network of communication the world has ever known. We live in a time when emotion rules reason, and present pleasure is valued more than future peace; when sacrifice has given way to enjoyment, and we do not know where we are headed. We walk in the midst of demons, where men betray one another, and hate one another, and love has grown cold. Ann Landers, who writes an advice column for young people, has observed: No one puts it in so many words, but there is in our viewpoint today the suggestion that we may as well live it up fast because tomorrow may never come. And among too many teenagers, living it up fast is expressed in accelerated dating, early smoking and drinking, sexual experimentation, premature marriage, and premature divorce. A highschool girl has written a poem which gives expression to the futility and emptiness of it all: A radio softly playing music slow and sad, fitting for thoughts of sorrow and pain. A drink smooth and potent, slowly swallowing down the everlasting pain. Cigarets one after another numbing the senses, keeping the mind busy. But - when the music is over, the drink finished, the cigaret put out - what then? That is the poem.

Is this the way to face the onrushing future, by escaping into a never-never land of a secular Nirvana? Or is there another way? Has the God who created us and our world called us to death - or to life? God has spoken. He has spoken to us in His Word. The Holy Scriptures do not gloss over the facts. They paint a much darker picture of man's condition than men have generally conceded to be true. The Bible teaches that there is something radically wrong with the world. A world determined to go along without God, says the Bible, is rotten through and through. People who think they can get along without God are dead. They are walking corpses. God's Word makes it perfectly clear that there is no deliverance from doom, except for one fact. That fact is Jesus Christ, God's own Son. Christ came into the world not to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He came to seek and to save the lost - to rescue and redeem - to take our place, ~~and~~ to endure God's wrath & punishment in our behalf! die our death. He was raised again from the dead that, trusting in Him, we might live forever with Him in glory. This is the great Good News of the Gospel: Telling us not to give up! He who endures

unto the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.

Do we really believe that - or is this all only a polite lip service whi we find easy to profess here in the security and safety of the church? How will it be tomorrow - at work, at school, at home? Will we be join the rank of those who life as though the world will go on forever? Will we dare to stand up and be counted for Him? Will we dare to buck the tide of godlessness and wickedness - prejudice and hatred that has come down upon us? Will we dare to boldly confess His Name - His love - by what we do, a what we say, and the way we act? People will not want to hear what we have to tel them. They will resent it, when you confront them with the reality of their sin. In their wisdom They will mock and despise and scoff at the foolishness of the Gospel. They will stop their ears when you tell them that the end is near and that they cannot pull themselves into heaven by their own selfish efforts and be their own saviors. The will try in one way or another to nail you to the cross as they nailed Christ to the Cross. They will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake. And then many will fall away.... But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Time is pressing short. We may soon run out of tomorrows. We dare not act slowly or with hesitation. We cannot live as if we had all the time in the world. In reality there may be only a little time left. We must work the works o: Him who sent us - to be light and salt in a dark and drab world - while it is day, before the night comes, and no man can work. This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come!...Then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other... He who endures to the end will be saved! Amen.