

Figuring out the future has always fascinated us human beings ever since we were young children. Our play includes time machines which can take us into the future. Then we get a little older and we play with our first Ouija board. For those of you who have never heard of a Ouija board, two players sit beside this wooden game board with letters on it and the words “yes” and “no.”

The two players ask a question and then you each place your hands on the game piece called a planchette. Everyone should know that the little heart shaped wooden piece with the glass is called a planchette. (Wikipedia can provide all sorts of useless info). Anyway, you slide this game piece across the board until it spells out an answer or lands on a “yes” or “no.” Magical interpretation of the future.

Or how many people here stop by your local convenience store and buy a lottery ticket? You dream the future when your power ball number is chosen from the ping pong balls and you are set with millions of dollars.

Or how many people watch a game show and imagine that you are a contestant on Jeopardy or Wheel of Fortune? You imagine choosing the right letters or saying the right Final Jeopardy question and winning thousands of dollars and how this money will pay off your bills.

Or how many people here with athletic interest pretend to have the last shot of a big basketball game and count down 3, 2, 1 and then you shoot and score as you sound the sound of the game ending horn. I know I have.

And how many elders here dream of the day that someone dies who has left their entire million dollar estate to the church and it seems to be an answer to any financial problem we think we encounter today?

All of us have these dreams of the future when we win something big or we travel into the future and receive answers or solutions to the problems and challenges we have today. All of us dream of a future which rescues us from our present. All of us dream of a future which rescues us from our present.

Our two passages of Scripture we just read say something about the future. This is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is the season of 4 weeks which precede Christmas where we in the church prepare ourselves for Christmas. It is not Christmas yet and it will not be Christmas until December 25th.

We live in a culture which wants us to rush into Christmas but we in the church practice the spiritual practice of waiting. We in the church learn to appreciate the importance of waiting. Because our culture tells us to not wait but to take the future into our hands.

The lectionary, the passages of Scripture which are assigned to each Sunday, always begin Advent with an apocalyptic scripture. Apocalyptic scriptures are scriptures which are concerned with the future. And today we read two Scriptures which are apocalyptic.

In the passage which Deke read, Paul writes to the Romans that they need to stay awake. He tells them that salvation is near to them. He tells them to live honorably in the way that they live and not waste the current time away through getting drunk and quarreling and being jealous of others. Paul tells the Romans to put on the armor of light and to overcome any darkness in the world.

The second lesson we read from Matthew talks about the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew tells about how that day will come quickly and without warning and that they need to be ready. But he also says something else. He tells them that no one knows when that day will occur. No one. Not even Jesus. Even Jesus does not know the future.

Now we have a lot of so called Christian writers today who have it all figured out when Jesus will return. They have written their books about the coming apocalypse and who will be left behind but they seem to have figured out the future better than Jesus himself. Matthew makes it clear that God alone knows the future. Not Jesus and certainly not Hal Lindsay and Timothy LeHaye.

But we all want to know the future. We want to know what tomorrow brings. We want to know what tomorrow brings so that we can figure out today. We read the story of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, and how they were banished from the garden because they wanted to become like God and know the future.

But being obsessed with the future led to their downfall in the present. So no matter how many time machines we build as children and lottery games we play and Ouija boards we manipulate, or “Left Behind” books we read, none of us can figure out the future.

I recently read that depression comes from being focused on the past and anxiety comes from being focused on the future. But living in the present means living with a sense of peace. Depression is focused on the past. Anxiety is focus on the future. And peace is being focused on the present.

The reality is that none of us know what the future brings. But Matthew in his writings made something very clear. The future belongs to God. Only God knows the future. And Matthew tells his readers that God is sovereign in the future just like God has been sovereign in the past and like God is sovereign in the present. The future is not something to be concerned about. The future is not something to be worried about. The future is in God’s hands.

But how many of us live with the belief that God is in control of the future? How many of us trust in God to be sovereign in the future?

Are you worried about what tomorrow will bring? Are you worried if you will have enough to take care of what you think you need? Are you worried about what will happen to your family in the future? Are you worried about what is going to happen to your stuff in the future?

Are you worried about what will happen to your career in the future? Are you worried about what is going to happen to this country in the future? Are you worried about what is going to happen to this church in the future?

As much as we like to think that we can control the future, there are so many variables that we have no control over. As powerful as we think we are, really we are not that powerful.

But Matthew tells us some really good news. The future is not something we need to worry about. The future is in pretty good hands. The future is in God's hands.

The same God who created the world out of nothing. The same God who placed people on this earth and called them very good. The same God who has led God's people throughout the ages. The same God who sent Jesus whom we prepare to welcome during this time of Advent.

We don't need to worry about tomorrow. God is in control of tomorrow. We are to live today to the fullest. We live today with a peace.

A peace that God is sovereign and a peace that God has got this. Indeed, God answers our question.

Are you worried about the future? God is saying to us, "When it comes to the future, I got this." AMEN.

-Texts: Romans 13: 11-14 and Matthew 24: 36-44

-Given: December 1, 2013 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)