

August 31, 2015

First Reading 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

Apparently the Thessalonians, expecting the second coming were concerned over the difference between those already dead and the ones still alive at the time of the second coming. That is, how would each be received into the kingdom? Paul puts their minds at rest by explaining his version – those alive, according to Paul, would have no advantage over the Godly dead. Those who were dead would rise first, then the still living would be caught up “to meet the Lord in the air.”

Gospel Luke 4: 16-30

Account of Jesus preaching for the first time in Nazareth, his home town, early in his public life. He read a quotation from Isaiah about a person sent by God to bring “glad tidings to the poor.” Then Jesus told the members of the Nazareth synagogue that this saying was fulfilled that day. The Nazarenes were at first impressed by Jesus, but later rejected him, even to the point of trying to kill him. This reflected Jesus’ statement that a prophet is rejected by his own people.

The reading from 1 Thessalonians may be the source for the belief in ‘The Rapture,’ held by some Evangelical groups. I don’t know where Paul got his information about the exact order in which the end of the world would occur. A word of caution – there have been many prophecies of particulars about the end of the world in the 2000 years of the Church’s existence, and the world has not yet ended. It’s best, I think, to have reason enlightened by faith, which is supported by the Scriptures, as our guide. God hasn’t appointed any one person to be His press agent. “Wait for the Lord” is the best advice, I think.

Jesus the Lord comes to re-visit his small hometown in this Gospel. Although his former neighbors are at first impressed by his authority and wisdom, they soon change to disbelief that a local boy could have so much wisdom. They also exhibit a form of greed, expecting some show of miracles from which they might benefit. Jesus appears to know both of these trains of thought. He tells them that he won’t be performing any miracles for them, giving the Old Testament examples of how selective were the miracles of Elijah and Elisha. Judging from Jesus’ words at other places, it is likely that the Nazarenes’ lack of faith was the main reason Jesus did no miracles for them. Their lack of faith seems to have been caused by their being too familiar with Jesus.

That last sentence is indicative of missed opportunities – because we are accustomed to situations or people, we may fail to see and appreciate how much beauty and grace are in these seemingly ordinary people or events. Artists have the ability to show us the ‘luminescent’ in the ordinary. We should try to take advantage of all these ways that God comes to us everyday, every minute. We don’t have to wait to ‘meet Him in the air’ as Paul says. He is present all around us, sometimes it seems, pleading for our attention. It only requires our slowing down and looking at our world with new eyes to find God all around us. Maybe this is the ‘miracle’ that Jesus will work for us today.