

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

So who is in charge? After the horrific attacks in Paris on Friday, with the continuous threats of more violence and terroristic attacks, many wonder and even ask, “who is in charge?”

There have been only brief periods of peace in the past two thousand years, even when people in the US have enjoyed peace, there have been “wars and rumors of wars” elsewhere in Europe, Africa, Asia, South and Central America. Always there is collateral damage as it’s termed, civilians killed in the quest for victory. Such things are always present, with broadcasting, videos and photographs sent out over Twitter, Facebook and other media even while atrocities happen. Images and propaganda sent from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Israel, France and our own nation.

We see the beauty of the earth and with it we see our world at what surely must be its worst. The violence continues and the war mongering of politicians never seems to stop. And in spite of the false prophesying of imminent apocalypse, we are in the “beginning of the birth pangs.”

So much of the attempted justification of war and violence is on religious claims from one group or another, with promises of martyrdom and paradise which are nothing more than an invitation to mass murder. A true martyr is the only one to suffer and die, mass murder is simply mass murder, crimes against humanity. Strangely enough with the claims of one religion or another as attempted justification of murder, violence and warfare, many have washed their hands of religion, wondering where God is in all this.

We know that the world is broken, that we are born in a state of separation from God. Jesus talks about the temple being destroyed, he’s asked for clues, signs of the end. Jesus flatly tells his disciples that this is only the beginning of the birth pangs. So what do we as his modern day disciples do, what are we to believe? Where is God?

God is indeed active, he is active in Jesus, who began to transform the world. But it’s not transformation that will end the atrocities, not in our usual way of thinking. Jesus does the unexpected, enduring suffering and death at the instigation of the religious authorities of his day, carried out by the mightiest power in the world two thousand years ago. The transformation begins, it begins and transforms from within. The destruction of the temple, happening after Jesus’ death and resurrection is a sign, a symbol that God is no longer to be found in the temple, in a geographic place. Instead God is active, present, working in and through the Word made Flesh, the Incarnation, Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus tells us from the cross “It is finished”, and God raises Jesus from death. Death is no longer ultimate, death has lost its sting, death does not get the last word. Life, true life, abundant life, has won.

War, terrorism, crimes against humanity do not win over life, these things have no power over forgiveness and reconciliation from and with God. You and I brothers and sisters are called to end the divisions, the brokenness, if indeed we go to war it is to be for the sake of others. You and I brothers and sisters must trust in the promise of our baptisms as raising us to new life with Jesus Christ. Death doesn't have the last word over believers and we who believe are to live our lives in giving our lives, proclaiming in our lives that we indeed have faith in the One who is really in control. There is only one God who gives life and love, more powerful than anything hatred can induce. The beginning of the birth pangs is all around us, it's happening, but for believers, for you and I, these are the birth pangs of resurrection, of rising with Christ in newness of life.

AMEN