

## Endings and Unveilings

Today Jesus brings his closest friends in close to talk about the apocalypse.

For many, "apocalypse" refers to "endings."

And it's particularly appropriate that Jesus focuses on endings today.

Because his own end is coming soon.

As his journey moves relentlessly toward the cross.

He speaks of endings that are both in the near future and in some distant, unknown time.

The end of the Jerusalem temple?

A mere generation away.

The seeds for its destruction already being sown by the Zealot guerrilla war against imperial Rome.

In roughly 30 years, Rome will invade and forever put an end to the Jerusalem temple; and for nearly 2000 years, the country of Israel itself.

But Jesus also speaks to them about the end of days.

When God will wrap up all of human history.

And so, as we come to the end of our church year, and nearly to the end of our calendar year, it's a good time to think about endings in our own lives.

And what a year this has been for endings!

What's ended this year, you ask?

Well, for the first time in our nation's history, the peaceful transfer of political power didn't occur.

A momentous, and ominous ending, indeed.

An incompetent, authoritarian, immoral buffoon sought through every means possible to overthrow the results of a free and fair election.

As investigations continue at state and national levels, the depths to which he sank are truly unfathomable.

One only wonders what the ramifications will be going forward.

The other major ending this year was the longest war in American history.

The war in Afghanistan.

After 20 years of assurances that a civil society formed in the image of the west was just around the corner, the immediate collapse of that illusion (as soon as money and power were withdrawn) was, to say the least, quite sobering.

The limited confidence we can put in the assurances of our military are only underscored here locally.

We've heard the Navy's assurances that our aquifer, which provides clean drinking water to over 400,000 of us, is perfectly safe!

Those millions of gallons of Navy fuel right on top of it in 80 year old tanks?

Nothing to worry about!

One wonders whether a fundamental trust in our institutions is something that's also coming to an end?

And finally, on this particular Sunday, we celebrate the feast day of Queen Lili'uokalani.

She herself is a symbol of another ending.

The tragic and illegal ending of the Hawaiian monarchy.

And for far too long, the intentional efforts to eradicate the Hawaiian culture itself.

Lili'uokalani was a woman of deep faith who took the long view, understanding that violence only begets more violence.

Instead, she submitted gracefully to this ending, at the end of a bayonet.

Yet with songs, poetry and stories, she hoped that she was laying seeds for a future resurrection of the culture that she embodied.

Such are some of the endings that we are dealing with today.

And yet, while the traditional understanding of “apocalypse” is “endings,” in fact “apocalypse” is better translated as “unveiling.”

And so, when we look at the insurrection of last January, what was unveiled?

What was revealed?

Well, we found out there’s a ton of folks in our nation who seem to prefer an authoritarian leader over democracy!

We discovered that a significant minority in our country are overtly racist, misogynistic, and nationalistic.

But what was also unveiled is that the other side of the political spectrum, the place where I often find myself most at home, has ignored, for decades, the growing inequality between highly educated people on the one hand and those without higher education.

The disparity in opportunity between white collar and blue collar, computer specialists and laborers, the professional class and ordinary workers, this chasm in opportunity has been a significant factor in increasing hateful rhetoric and fear of the other.

That disparity, now decades old, sends the message that life as so many once enjoyed it, is forever gone.

Doesn’t this particular unveiling demand that we, the privileged, engage in a searching and fearless moral inventory, and not merely point fingers at the angry mob?

Unveiling, when it comes to the disaster in Afghanistan, which cost thousands of American lives, and tens or hundreds of thousands of

Afghan lives, reveals yet again the preposterous notion that military power can change hearts and minds.

The shameless lie that guns, rather than dialogue, is the only real solution to the world's problems was exposed once again.

The breathtaking speed with which the mirage of Afghanistan collapsed unveiled yet again the hubris that we seem addicted to when it comes to issues of war and peace.

Finally, the unveiling that has slowly taken place since the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, shows that the long view, embraced by Lili'uokalani was the wisest choice.

The Hawaiian culture is resurgent.

Children once again speak the native tongue.

And indigenous people are rising up to seek again their own sovereignty.

The seeds that she planted so long ago are at long last coming into full bloom.

Endings and unveilings are not limited to our national or worldwide circumstances.

Endings and unveilings are part of each of our lives.

It's there with our elders who are coming to grips with ending a life of independent living, as they move in with children or into retirement homes.

It's there as we come to the end of this pandemic that has affected each of us in so many personal and private ways.

What is revealed to those who are moving from independence to dependence?

What is revealed as we move from these nearly 2 years of almost complete isolation from one another?

As we slowly seek to reopen, and restart a community, gathered once again in the flesh?

I heard the other day that Neil deGrasse Tyson, the TV physicist, said that he can't possibly believe in God because of all of the bad things that happen in life.

From natural disasters to human disasters, he said there can't possibly be a God who is all good or all powerful.

And yet, if there's one thing our meditation on endings and unveilings allows us to see is that if Dr. Tyson took a deeper look, he might come to a different conclusion.

Endings aren't the last word.

As Washington Irving says:

"There is a sacredness in tears.

They're not the mark of weakness, but of power.

They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues.

They are messengers of overwhelming grief, and unspeakable love."

Endings seem to be a necessary part of our ability to change and grow.

Pain is a necessary part of the human experience as we travel this journey from human to the divine.

Seeds must be cracked open in order to grow into something new and magnificent.

We are those seeds.

And in our cracking open, we become who and what we were always intended to be.

So don't regret the endings in your life.

Shed tears for your pain, yes!

Feel the loss.

Suffer for a time in the midst of loss.

Realizing that without endings, without pain, we can never become the dream that God dreams for each of us.

Endings are only the prelude to something magnificently new.

Perhaps that's why Jesus speaks of these things as birth pangs.

Because pain is usually what sets the stage for something unspeakably beautiful to be revealed.

C.S. Lewis, a master at encountering what is really real, says:

“There are no ordinary people.

You have never talked to a mere mortal.

Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal.

And their life is to ours — as the life of a gnat.

But it is immortals with whom we joke.

Work with.

Marry.

Snub.

And exploit.” *The Weight of Glory*, modified.

As we enter our own days of endings and unveilings, what do you  
fear?

And what do you hope to embrace?

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