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How many movies do you think have been made that deal with the end times? Apparently there is a list of over 1000 movies and if you google it you will find sites that tell you the best 100 apocalyptic movies. It's obviously a subject of great interest to a lot of people. When we think about apocalyptic movies we probably include Marvel superhero movies or interplanetary warfare, vacant-eyed zombies lurching through decimated neighborhoods, and the wholesale nuclear destruction of the planet. Apocalyptic with a capital A.

As much as we identify an apocalypse with total destruction that is not what the word means. In Greek an apocalypse is an unveiling or a disclosure of something secret and hidden. To experience an apocalypse is to experience fresh sight or insight. Honest disclosure. Accurate revelation. It is to capture reality as we've never captured it before. Basically, it's about looking past the doom and gloom and the destruction to see what is being revealed. What good is being exposed.

When the disciple emerged from the temple all they saw was an architectural marvel of the biggest, boldest, and most unshakeable symbol of God they knew. For them those massive stones held religious memory and their identity. They offer the faithful a potent symbol of spiritual glory, pride, and worthiness. In short, what takes the disciple's breath away as they gazed at the temple is the religious certainty and permanence those glittering stones displayed to the world.

However, Jesus invites them to look beyond the grandeur of the temple and recognize that God cannot be domesticated. The temple is not the epicenter of God's work; God is not bound by mortar and stone. God exceeds every edifice, every institution, every mission statement, every strategic plan, and every symbol human beings create in God's name. Moreover, God is not enslaved to superlatives; we're the ones easily seduced by the biggest, the newest, and the shiniest.

However, apocalyptic images, scarier than any Hollywood movie might produce, appear to surround us constantly. Our daily headlines scream apocalypse as see thousands of acres of land burning from massive wildfires even here in our state and in California. Drought is covering much of the world just as the devastation of hurricanes and flood wreak their havoc. Elsewhere, people are starving in the shadows of relentless war and have their homes reduced to rubble or are suffering racial or sexual violence. It doesn't take much to look at the headlines and see the apocalyptic movie version of the world.

In this troubling context, it's easy to despair. Or to grow numb. Or to let exhaustion win. But it's precisely now, *now* when the world around us feels the most apocalyptic, that we have to respond with resilient, healing love. It's precisely now, when systemic evil and age old brokenness threaten to bring us to ruin that we have to "hold each other tight" and allow new insight to take hold.

The apocalyptic vision that Jesus offers his disciples is one that asks them to see beyond the false security of what humans' concoct. "Don't be alarmed," he says, when truth is shaken, and nations make war, and imposters preach alluring gospels of fear, resentment, and hatred. Don't give in to terror. Don't despair. Don't capitalize on chaos. God is not where people often say God is; God doesn't fear-monger or incite

suspicion or demonize the other. God doesn't thrive on human dread. This is why Jesus insists we rely on calm strength and generous love in the face of the apocalyptic.

There is a native American story that tells about the Eagle that challenged all the animals to a race. Whoever lost the race would become the slave of the other. One by one the animals raced the eagle only to lose and become enslaved to the eagle. One day the turtle was told by the great spirit in a dream that he was to race the Eagle on behalf of all the animals and they would be free if he won. The eagle thought the challenge was hysterically funny and told the turtle he could set the terms of the race. The turtle instructed the eagle that he was to pick him up in his talons and fly high into the sky. When they got above the clouds and when he told him to, the eagle was to drop him. Whoever reached the ground first would win. The eagle agreed to the terms and picked the turtle up and flew high up into the sky. When the turtle yelled now, the eagle released him and the turtle plummeted to the ground at an amazing speed. The eagle was not fast enough and the turtle won so all the animals were free. They were ecstatic except they saw that the turtle was lifeless. They gingerly knocked on the turtle's shell and told him that he had won. Finally, the turtle spoke with obvious astonishment. He said, "The great spirit told me I'd win, but he didn't tell me I'd survive."

We so often feel like the turtle that we won't survive the traumas and the burdens of our life but the message that Mark was trying to get across to his readers as well as us is a message of hope. Hope enables us to survive - to win against fear. Hope is one of the three most precious metals of the human spirit, the others being love and faith. Because without hope, the human spirit dies, human relationships falter and societies decay. It is hope that will make the difference and it is hope in God in Christ that we do indeed survive.

Leo Tolstoy once eloquently wrote our hope is based on our belief in a God who is spirit, love and the principle of all things. Hope is based on God that is in me, as I am in God and the belief that the true welfare of humankind consists in fulfilling the will of God. Belief that from the fulfillment of the will of God there can follow nothing but that which is good for me and for all of humankind. Belief that the will of God is that everyone should love their neighbors and should act toward others as they desire that they should act toward them. Belief that the reason of life is for each of us simply to grow in love. Belief that this growth in love will contribute more than any other force to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Belief that we need to replace a social life in which division, falsehood and violence are all powerful with a new order in which humanity, truth and brotherhood will reign.

As Dean Hollerith of our National Cathedral has said: "Hope begins in each of us, in the depths of our soul. So, it is up to each of us to do what we can to heal our divisions, striving to love our neighbor and striving to love our enemies. However, we must at the same time stand up for the values of the cross, the values of the Kingdom. As the baptized, we are to be the body of Christ, to do Christ's work in the world. That means we have a responsibility to stand up for the weak, to care for the poor, to push back against racism, sexism, homophobia, and demonization of the stranger. That means speaking out against bad policy, hateful rhetoric, and any attempt to distort the truth. These things are not party, they are Gospel values. They are not left or right, Democrat or Republican – they are God's commands.

We have our marching orders. If we call ourselves Christians then regardless of politics, our work is the same – to love God, to love our neighbor, to be bearers of the Good News and to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. We have our work cut out for us so let's get to it." Amen.