

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

November 1, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Micah 3: 5-12

Responsive Reading; Psalm 43

Epistle Reading; 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13

Gospel Reading; Matthew 23: 1-12

Sermon Title: **As for Me and My House**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: When push comes to shove you have to decide where you stand and then stand fast. Ultimately you have to decide if you trust God to have a plan.

Our scriptures today portray a bleak picture of authority gone amuck. In the days of Micah, the religious leaders were also the political leaders. Micah is not very complimentary of their performance as spiritual or political leaders. As political leaders they pervert justice and scorn equality. Their judges give favorable rulings to the highest bidder and do not judge based on right vs. wrong. Their priests were in it for the money and not for improving the moral state of the individual or the community, and the prophets, i.e. the fortune tellers would

only give pleasing predictions to those who paid them in money or status. Then after these atrocities these hypocrites would claim that they were God's chosen people so God would not let anything bad happen to them. Psalm 43 echoes this sentiment when the author states, "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!"

In like manner Jesus is not approving of the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus says that they know what they are talking about but talk is all they do. The Scribes and Pharisees do not practice what they preach and therefore make for terrible role models. Jesus accuses them of milking the titles of Rabbi, Father, and Teacher as if they thought they were the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Oops, that doesn't work. Sliced bread had not been invented yet. Anyhow, you get my drift. The political atmosphere was in total disarray.

Does that sound familiar? We are now embroiled in the most toxic election since Abe Lincoln ran a campaign that challenged the well-established acceptance of slavery.

In today's politics one side believes that if we do not replace the current administration our country will continue to spiral down into a totally despicable excuse for a civil civilization while the other party believes that if we turn toward Socialism,

we will destroy our country and devastate the lives of 330 million citizens.

What makes this worse is that this chasm is not between Good and Evil, or Ignorant and Educated. No. Both sides are made up of good, smart people with strong feelings and fears.

Micah seems to say that the fears are justified and bad things are going to happen. Jesus advocates a change in priorities that can reverse the perpetration of evil that seems to be thriving.

In the book of 1st Thessalonians Paul spells out a way of living the change of priorities that Jesus advocates. Paul speaks of what he and his aides have done as an example that others could hold on to.

Paul says, “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

Paul and his people did their job to spread the gospel but worked other jobs so as not to misuse the people that they were trying to instruct.

Wouldn't it be nice if our politicians would do their jobs and not use those jobs to get rich?

In the biblical times the citizens of the society could not really do anything to change or improve the system but today we can. We can vote. We can make our wishes known to our government. If you believe that the future of our country and maybe even the world hang in the balance please, for the sake of Jesus Christ and all we hold dear, vote. If you do not believe that it is as big a deal as it is getting blown up to be, please vote. If you vote you will let our government know that somebody is watching and ready to act so they better mind their p's and q's.

I did not pick the scriptures for this Sunday. These scriptures were picked out many years ago for this Sunday. It makes you wonder how those ancient theologians could have known how appropriate these would be. The thing even more unbelievable is that there is a second set of scriptures for this Sunday for those who want to celebrate it as All Saints Day.

That set of scriptures is totally uplifting and tells how God's plan can make the worst possible scenario out to be the best thing that could ever happen.

If you believe that this election could be the world bypassing the Rapture and going straight to the Tribulation you might be interested in one of those readings for this Sunday.

Let me read Revelation 7: 9-17.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might. Be to our God forever and ever, Amen."

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So, he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall never hunger anymore or thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Did you get that? If the worst were to happen then numbers that no one could count would gather together from all nations, and peoples and tongues and would come together and serve God on earth and in heaven.

God has a plan for the saving of this world and everyone that believes in Him.

It does not matter what happens in this election as long as we do our part, God will do His. An Admiral in the Civil War had to move his ships up the Mississippi to split the Confederacy and there were explosive mines in the river called torpedoes. He knew that if any of his ships made it, they would accomplish their objective so he said, "Dam the torpedoes. Full speed ahead."

This Tuesday let us take our queue from that Admiral let us say, "Dam the torpedoes. Full speed ahead." And then let us vote and trust God to do the rest.

Hallelujah and Amen.