

**Sunday, November 18, 2018 – 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**“What Next?”**

Mark 13: 1-13

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV  
Problem/Solution Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now that the midterms are over, we're done with all this political stuff right? Well maybe you'll get a reprieve from glossy mailings, TV ads, calls and texts but make no mistake, campaigning for 2020 has already begun! Plenty of jockeying and mudslinging and predictions and rallies and barnstorming through early primary states are already happening. When the future of the country's leadership hangs in the balance, you get the division – who's to blame, who's right, who's wrong, what do you do? Meanwhile, the nation waits. The question God challenges you with today, the question you need to ponder from the perspective of your faith is this: a nation waits – for what?

The sad truth of the matter is that many people, including you and me to an extent are waiting only to discover who will be voted into office in the next election cycle, before this next Congress is even sworn in. We have been sucked into the rhetoric that the social, educational, cultural, economic, environmental, and moral salvation of our country is in the hands of political parties. God help us if that's the case.

Some people ask me why Lutheran pastors – or more specifically, I – don't say more from the pulpit about politics. Is it lack of conviction? Are there cowardly preachers who are afraid to step on anyone's toes? No. It is the absolute certainty and steadfast determination that the church's function is to proclaim Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried, and raised for the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life and that unless there's a clear issue of sin and evil, taking formal stands on lesser things like candidates and policies makes noise that drowns out the main thing – Jesus.

It is that message and that message alone that properly motivates you to go from this church and actively, responsibly, and passionately exercise your duty as citizens. Recognizing full well, whether you accept it or not, that genuine and sincere believers in Jesus Christ come down all over the political spectrum. Do not be deceived into believing that politics can be

Christianized and that good Christians are on one side and bad Christians or even “You can’t be a Christian if you’re with them” are on the other.

Instead be reminded again today that God is over it all and will use whatever the outcome of this election to continue His steady, undaunted effort to save, not the nation, but the people. In our Gospel lesson today Jesus’ disciples were trapped in the politics of their day. They grew up believing that God’s work of salvation was primarily the work of saving their nation Israel. They were firmly convinced that’s God’s solution to the problems of their society was the establishment of a government led by Jesus, assisted by them, as his disciples to restore justice, freedom, and glory to their nation.

Their political hopes all rested on this: the international recognition of Jerusalem as the sovereign capital of Israel (see how little changes?!) and more precisely to the Temple and all of its supporting facilities. And so we find them this morning leaving the Temple complex and traveling out the East Gate of city and headed for the adjacent hilltop called the Mount of Olives that overlooks the city. Seeking confirmation from Jesus of their earthly dreams for their future greatness one of them said to Jesus, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

You can hear the pride in the disciple’s voice and the anticipation of Jesus’ response back. Maybe, “Yes they are glorious and they will be our headquarters for the restoration of the nation. Soon my Father in heaven will give the enemy over into our hands and we will rule the people wisely. And the glory and power of the nation of Israel will be restored.” That was their hope and a part, at least, of their misguided motivation for following Jesus.

I wonder if a 21st century American translation might sound like this – “Look, Jesus. What a magnificent country! What incredible founding principles – our Declaration of Independence – our Constitution! Look what we have accomplished in our brief 242 year history.” And the anticipated response? “You Americans are truly a great people. Of the billions who have populated the planet since I created it you, you have finally gotten it right. You are the cornerstone of my plan to restore the planet.”

The disciples were shocked by Jesus response. “Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” What comes next is

downright discouraging, even dream shattering. Far from the political paradise the disciples imagined Jesus describes trouble and seemingly endless turmoil.

There will be false religious leaders using the name of Jesus who deceive people; political unrest – wars, rumors of wars, nations and kingdoms fighting each other; natural disasters – earthquakes and famines. And then it gets worse – the disciples themselves will be brought up on charges and stand trial before governors and kings; even the most basic unit of human civilization – the family – will suffer; brother betraying brother to death and a father his own child; children rebelling against parents and having them put to death; and finally all men will hate you because of me.

Not a pretty picture is it? All these things have happened and they continue to happen. In the months and years that followed Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension back to heaven the disciples witnessed many of these things. The disciples were arrested and ordered to stop preaching Jesus Christ. All of the original twelve, except John, tradition reports, were executed for their faith. In Rome Christians were rounded up and given the option of denying Christ or death. Families were pitted against each other to betray one another as believers or die. In 70 AD the Romans finally grew tired of the nation of Israel's rebellion. They surrounded the city of Jerusalem, starved it's inhabitants to death (one historian reports that people were reduced to cannibalism), and then they broke through the walls of the city and pulled down the Temple stone by stone.

And it has gone on that way throughout the ages. Sometimes more visible than others, but the pattern is there. This is not what I wanted to hear from Jesus. I much prefer the we-take-over-the-world-and-everybody-lives-happily-ever-after vision for the future.

But then, remember that there is something bigger going on than national politics. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The truth that Jesus is God in human flesh, who came down from heaven, not to save nations, but to save people. His is the big picture. The grand sweep of all time from the creation to last day. He lived out His days as a man in perfect trust and obedience to the heavenly Father because there is no way to permanently fix the devastation that sin – the rejection and rebellion of the human race against God – without destroying it and starting over. To rescue us from that destruction Jesus gave up

His life at the cross. He suffered and died for every human being who has ever lived and who ever will live. Then He rose again from the dead, established His church, and sent it out into the whole world to proclaim this message.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That's what God is doing – no matter who's elected or which way history turns. God's plan continues. Stand firm until the end, Jesus says.

In the meantime your sins are forgiven such as your worries, your fears, even your hatred of those whose politics are different from your own. In the meantime, be renewed in your heart and mind that by faith in Jesus. You are part of the ultimate solution to the problems of this world. With that confidence go get involved, participate in politics, be passionate about your hope and your vision for the future of our country. But no matter what happens, God has and will continue to use it for His ultimate purpose to advance the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.