

Old Testament: Daniel 12:1-4
New Testament: Acts 24:10-21

Please join me in prayer. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

What I want to suggest this morning, on this day in which we celebrate and honor the saints who have gone before, is that we need not fear the “corruption” of others. In my opinion, fundamentalists and hyper-conservatives who are attempting to legislate morals by encoding their specific view of morality into law are not doing so out of love and reverence for God, but are doing so out of a fear of being corrupted. Not only is this fearful behavior but it is also a demonstration of weakness and not strength. Strength, as Paul demonstrated in our reading from Acts, consists of applying sound reason and logic to your argument and winning by persuasion instead of by brute force or by attempting to legislate one’s personal moral values onto everyone else. These kinds of behaviors seem eerily reminiscent of the behaviors of the religious leaders of Israel with whom Jesus so often found himself in conflict. They were far more interested in keeping themselves pure, in avoiding being morally corrupted, that they failed to see the humanity and suffering of those they were controlling and manipulating. Today, to my eyes, there is a lot of fundamentalist and hyper-conservative hand wringing over “moral values” with little to no observed regard for the humanity and suffering of their fellow human beings. They sound more Pharasaic-like than they sound Jesus-like,

But their fear is misplaced. They fear being corrupted or they fear failing to get Jesus into people’s hearts. Either way they fear hell or eternal consequences so much so that they give little to no regard for God’s image bearers, their fellow human beings. God does not call us to fear. God calls us to love, grace, and mercy. The old, horrendous saying has it backwards. It is not, “kill them all and let God sort them out”. It is “love them all and let God sort them out”. The biblical evidence for such a reversal was found in today’s scripture readings.

Daniel is having an apocalyptic vision, akin to John’s revelation. He is seeing a vision of the end times. And what he sees is that those who have gone before, the dead, will find themselves awakened to face eternal judgment from God. What this suggests is that the critical work of our earthly lifetime is *not* getting Jesus into people’s hearts nor compelling people to follow strict moral guidelines, but communicating the love, grace, and mercy of an all-loving God. Daniel’s vision does not indicate *who* is awakening to everlasting life or to shame and everlasting contempt just that both are possibilities. This suggests that there will be arbitration regarding the living of one’s

life at the end of all things. And my question then becomes do you, do we, want to be judged by God for how well we did or did not enforce or impose our moral values on the rest of society? Or, do you, do we, want to be judged by God for how well we loved our fellow human beings, our fellow image bearers whom, I might humbly remind you, Jesus commands us not to judge for ourselves?

Paul corroborates this concept of a final judgement that is not contingent upon whether or not we let others “corrupt” us in his defense before the governor of Caesarea. Both the just *and* the unjust, both the righteous *and* the unrighteous, will be resurrected to stand trial before God, who is the final arbiter, at the end times. This suggests that there is no way for us to personally secure our own salvation by enforcing or imposing moral codes and restrictions upon people so as to keep ourselves “pure” in the avoidance of corruption. This suggests that Paul was right when he said it is purely by the grace of God that we have been saved and this is not of our own doing so that none may boast. I don’t know what is in the book that Daniel saw but I’m very confident that it is not full of individual ledger sheets where the number of people we “saved”, by getting Jesus into their hearts and keeping ourselves “pure”, are listed. I’m more inclined to believe that the ledger sheet will be a record of how many of God’s fellow image bearers we loved and did not judge according to our own broken, sinful nature.

This All Saint’s Day I re-iterate, “love them all and let God sort them out”. This is our calling; this is our charge. Fear not your own “corruption” and love people well, right until the bitter end. Amen.