

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

How Redemption Takes Place First Week of Advent Saturday, December 5, 2015
8:15 AM Is 30:19-21, 23-26; **Mt 9:25—10:1, 5a, 6-8** (BVM) (We have to fight
against bad news. We have to become people of good news, of faith, and of hope.)

“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.”

It is not very easy to translate this story of Jesus and the early disciples into the institutional life of the Church as we know it. The primary goal here was healing. **What was the point of bringing about this healing?** Well, first of all, **it itself is a proclamation of the gospel** that, as St. Paul put it, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

One of the great problems that the Jewish people had, the Jewish thinkers, teachers, was **understanding how they could be suffering when they are following the Law.** Their idea was that God was doing everything. They really did not have a clear idea of what we call free will. God was behind everything. If things were good, that was good, and that’s because God had agreed to give them prosperity and life and liberty and so on. Then when things started going bad, they looked at themselves as the cause of everything. When the northern kingdom fell the southern kingdom said, well, what did they do wrong? And they came up with certain answers: idolatry, bad politics: they made alliances with the wrong powers and social injustice. **But they never came up with the answer, well, we were just overpowered by a force greater than ourselves. That was not possible in their mind.**

Later when the southern kingdom was exiled, it was worse. **We have been doing everything right. How could this happen?** They even have psalms to that effect. **They did not have the experience of death and resurrection.** They did not have the experience of the cross. **Jesus is the incarnation of the Word of God that has come into our world to show us how redemption takes place. It is through the power of love,** which is not power as people usually think of it. **And it does not protect the innocent from evil.** In this way, **the whole idea of the**

Old Testament is wrong, that if you follow God, you will be protected. If you are faithful to the covenant, God will be faithful to the covenant. God will be your king; God will protect you. Well, not really. It doesn't work out.

This of course is what the Cross is all about. **It is through the Cross of Jesus Christ and the resurrection that we know that the vindication of the just is on the other side of death,** not this side. Meanwhile, **Jesus had to start to convince people that God was on their side,** that God had not sent blindness, paralysis, demons. These weren't from God. These forces were interfering with God. And people were vulnerable to them because they didn't know any better. It's the truth that makes us free. They didn't have the truth. **This is the beginning of sowing the seeds of truth that God is really for us, not against us;** and that it is from God that we will find wholeness and healing and salvation.

Only we have to contribute something. **We have to contribute faith.** It is true not in every single instance does the person healed have to have faith, but in general faith is a necessary component to this work that Jesus inaugurates. And where it doesn't exist, it doesn't go on. As St. Paul points out, **faith has to go to hope. We are saved in hope,** St. Paul says. So we do have something to contribute to this great work of the kingdom of God. We have to bring our faith to it, and we have to let hope become deeply rooted in us, in spite of what we see in the world. We can't let the world's bad news dominate our minds. This is the good fight **we have to fight against bad news. We have to become people of good news, of faith, and of hope.** And then we will be like the disciples. We will be moving into the world as signs of the coming good.