

My Times are in His Hand

The Psalmist prays in Psalm 31:15: *My times are in Your hand. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies and from those who persecute me!*

These words appear in the weekly lectionaries often - for Passion Sunday, Good Friday, and in Introits in Holy Week, among others. Of course, that focus is on the times of our Lord, His journey to the cross, and the plan of salvation laid down before the world began but fulfilled in time.

Less often, almost rarely, do these words get applied to us and to our lives. I fear that this is a problem, especially in a time in which some within the veil of Christianity keep insisting your best life is now and others willingly surrender everything in pursuit of an insulated life protected from threat, affliction, and death!

Our times *are* in His hand. Be they good times or bad, at least in our judgment, it does not matter. We live out our days in His hand, according to His providence, and trust in Him. We do not trust in princes, earthly kingdoms, or human powers.

Our lives seem rather chaotic - especially in the wake of a pandemic, in the midst of economic change and uncertainty, and amid upheavals and conflicts. We look not so much for order but to control things and to establish the order we prefer. That has always been our problem. But it is not the solution.

There is no such thing as life without risk. Sin assured us of that. We cannot find or build a safety net around our lives to insulate us from physical ill, doubt, fear, or death. The world may presume that you can negotiate your way around the troubles and trials of this mortal life, but God warns us against such a false and misleading dream. We cannot control things, but we can control our response to them. In that response there are several choices.

We can ignore or dismiss the reality of or the magnitude of our enemies and the powers against us. We can live as if death were not real or as if we were in control of our lives. Some do. Death catches them and they found out, perhaps too late, that ignoring your enemies does not make them go away. Or we can attempt to make our peace with our defeat. Some will accept death as long as it waits until their bucket lists are finished, they may be forced to surrender to age or frailty, or they decide when to die and can find a painless way to die. But death is no respecter of persons and comes to the young as well as the old, to the healthy as well as the sick, and to those who have everything to live for as well as those who have nothing to live for.

But there is another response, and that is to live in the Christian hope and to die confident that this hope will not disappoint you. Unfortunately, some Christians have presumed that the first two options are as Christian as this.

We will be forced to live with COVID just as we are forced to live with risk and death from other sources. Life is not the discovery of a safe place but faith's surrender to the One whose death and resurrection rescues us from sin, death, and the devil. You may not be able to choose Christ as your option, but He has chosen you. Faith is not a decision as much as it is the admission of the sin that caused life to be so risky and the confession that only Christ is our answer and security. When we admit that our times are in His hand, we are not resigning ourselves to the inevitable but rejoicing that there is real hope and promise that none of our enemies can steal.

Time keeps on ticking away. We go from one hour to the next – from one day to the next. The seconds just keep on ticking away. While each day may feel the same, they are not. While we have control over certain things that happen each day, time itself is not under our control. Our times *are* in His hand. The clock is not simply ticking down the hours and minutes but moving toward its perfect fulfillment when we are with Him where He is in the place He has prepared where neither clock nor calendar are needed.