

You could see the traffic beginning to get heavier miles away from the race track.

Driving on the interstate in Austin, you could take many separate exits to get to the Circuit of the Americas, and from there, if you didn't know to be looking for denser traffic, you might not have noticed, but we did our best to trust google maps. It might have a good idea about what path the masses took that day. So we'd avoid the heaviest area, but it wasn't long until every route became clogged up, and that happened miles and miles away from the parking lots. Which makes sense, because the nations were streaming to watch this car race; me and my in-laws were simply 6 of 440,000 attending that weekend.

And I'm not joking when I say the nations gathered there. At one point, the announcer called out for each country in attendance to shout out, seeing which drivers had people from their homeland supporting them. Canadians were represented—I actually overheard someone talking about Alberta as I walked along a path. But the sport is huge in Europe and parts of Asia, so though we neighbour the States, we were not the biggest international representation, I don't think. People had come from China and Britain and Italy. They were there from everywhere. It seemed like Isaiah's vision in chapter 2, but I assure you that was not the glorious mountain of the Lord.

That reading from Isaiah 2 can be pretty defeating in this day and age. With the hope we have in Christ, with the promises we want others to rejoice in, the idea of people streaming to Christ, to salvation, to the new heavens and the new earth, that's the goal and desire, isn't it? To know that our family members and friends are among that endless throng, to know that it's full of strangers from all demographics, all nations and languages, and that they're now a part of the family and fold, that warms the heart. We hear this reading and we can't wait for that day to occur, because in this era of human history, it certainly seems as if the opposite were true.

Rather than swarming to the Lord, it appears that now more than in any recent history, people are indifferent to the Lord if not antagonistic. They don't seek His goodness and glory;

His law and teaching are not their desire but instead their disdain; rather than finding peace in His midst, they seek peace in the world and ask God and His religion, His people to stay out of the way.

I think the church today often speaks like the Jews after the temple was rebuilt; they were happy that they could worship the Lord, but they grieved that all was not as it used to be. The older ones wept, telling those who had no memory of the first temple that the older one was bigger and better, truly grander.

The Church, many remember, was the center of our world. You gathered here and met with your friends; it wasn't hard to meet a spouse here. Financially, we didn't have to worry but we could put ourselves to work with this project, we could run this program, and we had a blast doing it. The world didn't look funny at us, because we were the world. So it was easy to be the church and proclaim her message. And to have lost that, it's something many must grieve.

But it's not something that we were ever promised, and it's not something we should strive to get back.

If we want to seek a Christian world, one where our ethics and morals dominate, one where our faith is accepted and in fact believed everywhere you go, we would be working in a different direction than what Jesus paints the Christian life and the end times to be.

In other readings He warns the faithful followers that they will be divided from their families, they will be cast before the authorities with the goal of their humiliation and their death; they will be hated because Jesus is hated. The world, rather than following Jesus, will be lovers of self, indulging whatever desires they have rather than repenting of their sins and seeking God's holiness. And in today's Gospel lesson, the picture Jesus has for us is more subtle, but strangely more bleak as well. The world will be just as it was in the days of Noah, before that purifying and deathly flood. But Jesus doesn't emphasize the horrendous deeds people will be seen doing, egregiously acting out against God and neighbour. No, instead they

carry on as if nothing is the matter, as if God does not exist and as if they have no need to care about anything divine or eternal.

If no other picture of the end matches our current culture, this one certainly does.

While there are Christians tormented for their faith in some parts of the world, and while evil does seem like it's getting a greater hold on society, though likely just because of the constant news and social media cycle, we are simply more aware of the atrocities all around, the greatest reality is that people want to live a decent enough life, to improve their well-being, to eat, drink, and be merry and married, and to do it all without a thought about God. They've stepped down from the mountain of God if they were ever upon it, or they simply refuse to approach it and they walk their own path, directly away from it.

Yet for these too, who harbour either antagonism or apathy towards the true God, are those for whom Christ died.

When He came the first time, 2000 years ago, He was paving the way to the mountain of the Lord, coming into the wilderness in order to seek and save the lost, drawing them to Himself through His death that all would be His own, that all the nations would hear and believe. And now that He comes again, week by week by week, He is fulfilling that desire, in spite of the mass exodus from the Church we believe we see with our eyes. It might not be quite as dramatic as driving into a race track, where people are cutting in front of one another, weaving in and out of the lanes to remain in the quickest queue to get into the grounds, but the church is growing, one by one by one as sinners are told of the comfort of forgiveness, as those who fear death are given the assurance of its defeat via the empty tomb and even the gift of baptism, as those lost and alone are brought into the holy Church to find themselves among brothers and sisters for this life and eternity.

Christ is working out His will to bring the world to Himself by working in the Church to love one another, as Paul writes in Romans.

Owe nothing, nothing except love.

And two quick comments. First, he is not speaking the perfect financial advice, as if it's unholy to have debts, though there was a beautiful understanding of what was mine is yours and yours mine in the early church. He is speaking of the only thing on constant debt to everyone around, and that is to love them, to care for them.

And he's not saying to owe this debt as if you've refrained from paying it, letting others know that you'll care for them next Tuesday, maintaining the promise that you'll love them rather than actually doing it.

He is telling them that, out of the love that has been shown to them, out of the depth of love poured into them from heaven, via the cross and the preached Word, there is nothing for them to do but to love each person around them constantly.

In doing so, they will support the needy, they will refrain from bringing harm through their sin, they will remind their fellow saints of the love they've been shown in the hopes that others don't forget it, and by such acts of love, those outside the Church may just want a little piece of what was going around.

But don't delay in such love, Paul says, because just as Jesus reminds us, there's no telling when the day of salvation, when our faith will be made sight will at last appear, but we ought to anticipate its quick arrival rather than getting lazy, even apathetic, presuming we still have time.

Tomorrow is not guaranteed, and with each passing day, the odds that tomorrow isn't here increases ever so slightly. Which is wonderful news to the Christian, as you will be with your Lord, but it also means that the best day to pray for the person in need is today; the best time to make the casserole and deliver the card is now. If you have the chance to console the unbeliever in the face of wounded conscience or impending death, take this chance and don't wait for the next. Certainly fulfilling the law of love in this way doesn't get you into heaven, but being aware of the urgency of the time, this keeps your eyes fixed on Jesus and it keeps your priorities straight; Christ first and Christ last, and the rest just a beautiful gift from Him.

The day to begin fighting against sin and temptation is now; the day to attend to God's Word and receive His Sacrament is quite literally today; the moment to rejoice that you have another opportunity to love as Christ has loved you is each and every moment as the clock ticks on. Christ your Lord has secured your salvation, He has called you His own, and He has poured down His love upon you today and for eternity, so for our sake and for our neighbour's sake, today let us walk in the Light of the Lord.

Amen.