

Things Are Getting What?

“Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” From Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43, The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat.

Postmillennialists believe that Christ will come after the thousand years (millennium) mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6. Post – Christ comes after. The rule or kingdom of God is presently being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel. **Things are getting better and better.** Christ is already reigning through his church, and he will bring to the world a thousand years of peace and righteousness prior to his return at the conclusion of history. You have to be an optimist to be a postmillennialist. This position lost many adherents after WWI.

Premillennialists believe that Christ will come before the millennium begins. Pre – prior to the millennium. In spite of all attempts to Christianize society, **things are getting worse and worse.** So bad that only a world-shattering act of God can put things right.

By and large, Presbyterians aren't into either Pre or Post millennialism. Whereas some Christians major in such things, we know that the word *millennium* only appears in a couple of verses of Revelation 20. What one believes about pre or post is not the litmus test of the Christian faith.

Our official denominational position is amillennial. We regard the millennium not as an exact thousand years, but like other numbers in the visions of Revelation, symbolic of a long period of time – the period extending from the first coming of Christ to his return. And his return doesn't signal the end of the world. It's the transformation of this world into what God has had in mind all along, what didn't happen in the Garden of Eden, the fullness of the kingdom of God or God's rule. “Thy kingdom come,” we pray in The Lord's Prayer.

I also know people who say they are pro-millennialists. They're all for it. Know others who say they're pan-millennialists. It'll all pan out in the long run. Whatever one's position, central is the affirmation that Christ will return as he promised to destroy the forces of evil and establish God's rule forever.

But Presbyterians are known as Murphy's denomination. We believe anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Consequently, we need a law or a rule or a procedure to deal with it when it does. Checks and balances have always appealed to us. Details are much more important than, “Trust me.” And whereas many people pooh-pooh the notion of sin, we believe that sin does incredible damage and devastation. That sin is deeply entrenched in the fabric of life. Many people confine notions of sin to individual actions, but the reality is that corporations sin, nations sin, churches sin, schools sin, clubs sin, institutions sin. The blight of sin is all about us, but it's not that things are rotten to the core. There is wheat growing alongside the weeds.

Rather than the optimism of the postmillenarian or the pessimism of the premillenarian, the amillenarian takes seriously the realism of Jesus' Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat, (above). Namely, good and evil will develop side by side until the harvest, at which time life as we know it will be transformed into the new world coming.

It's just that on some days it seems like the weeds have overcome the wheat. Pessimism – DJ