

Dawn occurs somewhere *between* darkness and daybreak.

A Johnny Mercer lyric that made him and the crooner Bing Crosby a lot of money went as follows: *You've got to accentuate the positive / Eliminate the negative / Latch on to the affirmative / Don't mess with Mister In-Between // You've got to spread joy up to the maximum / Bring gloom down to the minimum / Have faith or pandemonium / Liable to walk upon the scene . . .*

And yet the Church at this darker time of the year would remind us of darker days to come – as spoken by the prophet Malachy: *Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch.* That's more like accentuating the negative and eliminating the positive! So also speaks the Gospel reading where Jesus himself tells of wars and insurrections, earthquakes, famines, plagues – and then of arrests and persecution, of hatred, courtrooms . . . negatives accentuated to an extreme. No positives.

Which leads one to question, contrary to Johnny Mercer's hopeful advice that we accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative, can we ever really eliminate the negative? And do we want to or can we? Indeed history, even the history of the Bible, often reveals that what we call negative can turn out in some mysterious way to have been positive. The story of Jesus goes tragic from the moment King Herod massacres innocent children in an attempt to erase his infant rival in Bethlehem. It ends up with the infant's older self being nailed to a cross. And yet we describe that story as "Good News", the victory of grace over judgmentalism.

And in today's Gospel Jesus scares his disciples with the warning that the four hundred year old Temple of Jerusalem was literally on the verge of deconstruction, not one stone to be left upon another. Never to be rebuilt. Catastrophic, a negative event. And yet it diverted God's people, both Jews and Christians, *away from* the "holy" land out into the farthest reaches of the Gentile world to contribute to our civilization's education, to elevate the status of humanity from groveling before bulls and planets and emperors as deities, freeing our minds and imaginations to become the astonishing faculties they were created to be – while also *casting shadows*. Such experiences, such turnabouts from positive to negative to positive again seem to be the way things really are. We and our world are a composite of Yes and No.

So often the thing we affirm (say Yes to) turns out to be a thing we begin to question, even reject (say No to). That's happened to me so many times. And so often the thing we reject, condemn (say No to) opens up into something wonderful. Life oscillates between a Yes and a No both of which ripen into a kind of fusion instead of confusion and polarization. It depends on how deeply you think. As Christ says: if you build your mind upon sand (the twitter of everyday), when the rains hit, you will be washed away. Whereas if you build upon the rock of inherited Wisdom (and mistakes), you will still BE "there" to lovingly, mercifully rebuild our world when the flood subsides. Don't waste your life. Learn things.