

*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power... (1 Corinthians 15:24)*

My wife has always been a reader. Growing up, she would stay up late to read, though she would have to do it furtively with a flashlight under her covers. Every once-in-a-while, she will stay up late even now to finish a book, but she no longer has to hide with a flashlight! Something she still does, though, which has always struck me as odd, is that she usually reads the last part of the book before starting at the beginning. It's the same with movies—when we're watching something together, she oftentimes is asking me what happens before we get to the end. I'm the opposite; I never want anyone to ruin the 'surprise'. I don't like knowing what happens. My wife does!

Books and movies may be their own kinds of stories, but there is one story that is completely unmatched. The story of this world, the story that God has put into motion through his mighty power, is sometimes called "The Greatest Story Ever Told." It isn't a story in the pejorative sense ("*just* a story"). The grand story of salvation is the history of God's words and deeds from the beginning, through the middle, into the eternal end. It's the story in which we live right now.

We may imagine that when we die, the 'end' of the story has come. We're born (beginning); we live (middle); and then we become part of the earth (end). *From dust you are and to dust you shall return* (Genesis 3:19). For our self-centered world, for our self-obsessed culture, for our egocentric nature, death is the end. But, of course, it's not the end of *the* story. That's because we're not at the center of the universe – then, now, or ever. However, we *are* an important, if tiny, part of it.

If we're not the central focus of the grand story of God's power and love, then our deaths are not the end. The story goes on, and God has more in store. The truth is, we know the end of the story. And, as Christians, we *need* to know the end of the story. This month, the Church remembers "the end." We remember the end of the lives of the saints who have gone before (All Saints' Day – November 1 [observed November 7]). We realize the grief that's present when we lose someone, but we also remember our loved ones, who died in the faith, with joy, because we know that they are now resting with the Lord. Most of all, though, we remember the end that God has in store for us and for all creation. Sure, the readings at the end of the Church year, readings which oftentimes have Jesus teaching about the 'end times,' can be scary. But, in Christ we look forward to what is to come. When Jesus returns, he will raise up the dead and dwell with his saints in a new and perfect creation. There is, for us, no suspense. There is no guessing. God is faithful, and he has promised to overcome sin, the devil, and death itself. So, whether we struggle with what's going on now, or whether we find ourselves concerned with what is to come, we know that God will make all things right in Jesus. And that's one ending I like knowing!

-Pastor Squire

"Despised and scorned, they sojourned here; but now, how glorious they appear! Those martyrs stand, a priestly band, God's throne forever near. On earth they wept through bitter years; now God has wiped away their tears, transformed their strife to heav'nly life, and freed them from their fears. They now enjoy the Sabbath rest, the heav'nly banquet of the blest; the Lamb, their Lord, at festive board Himself is host and guest.

("Behold a Host, Arrayed in White", *LSB* 676, v. 2)