Even though we are assured that no one knows when the end of the world will come – there have been people in every century that have proclaimed to have figured it out – some very cleverly and quite convincingly.

They have taken scripture passages like from today’s readings or from the Book of Revelation and have interpreted different world events, wars, rulers, famines and catastrophes as fulfillment of different passages.

And for every century since Christ, they have been wrong.

Even though predictions have little, if any, meaning, we can still find meaning in today’s scripture readings.

Every one of us can predict one thing and be right every time.

We can predict that the world we know – the world of our personal day-to-day existence will one day, sooner or later, come to an end.

We know not the day or the hour or how!

If we fear death, today our scripture readings bring us face-to-face with that fear.

From the beginning, we have been told that this planet is not our true home. We are only strangers and guests – stewards of this speck of God’s universe for a while – we flower and we fade – and then unto dust we shall return.

It matters not how long we live, it only matters how we live.

It matters not what we have or accumulate, it only matters how we share those things.

It matters not what trials we have, it only matters if they separate us from God.

For people of faith, these readings are not to create fear, but rather hope.

These readings actually assure us that our lives have a direction - this is not an aimless existence for us.

However, we can flounder here, we can never be fully satisfied here, we can be restless here, but that is built into us, so that we might long for our creator, long to be home with our God in the end.

St. Augustine put it best when he said, “O God, you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless ‘til they rest in you.”

Mark’s gospel was addressed to people who had experienced the Roman’s destruction of their temple in Jerusalem, the central place where they knew God.

All that was left was the western wall, now known as the “wailing wall” where people went to lament their pain, suffering and trials – and still do to this day.

The people were suffering persecution and starvation at the hands of the Romans and they wondered why God did not come to save them.
It seemed to them that their faith was useless – as we can easily feel when life is difficult and answers are not coming our way.

Mark spoke of the darkened sun and moon and the falling stars to describe their world.

How often we describe our pain by saying that it seems like our world is falling apart.

However, both the reading from Daniel and Mark’s gospel speak of an ultimate victory after a purifying time of trial and suffering.

Somehow the power of God who is all good is winning and ultimately will win out over evil, pain and darkness in our life if we trust in God.

It is our FAITH that helps us say in troubled times, “It will all work out! Something good will come out of this!”

In our troubled lives and world we sometimes desperately need the message these readings bring.

The message and promise of the fig tree is that it sprouts new life and Jesus says it should teach his disciples that he is near.

Today we have been reminded of our origins and our destiny.

We are God’s – blessed by God with LIFE itself – created by God to live with God and we are given this brief existence on earth as an opportunity to know, love and serve God.

Our patient God Waits for our response to such incredible love.

Whatever our life holds right now – whether we are in the spirit of needing the wailing wall of lament – whether we need to funnel our restlessness toward God – or whether we have the fig tree joy of new life happening to us – may we cherish that promise of eternal life and live in hope.