

Beware, the end is near
Pastor John Hicks
First United Methodist Church

Are you prepared for the end of the world? Based on the Mayan calendar prophecy and the movie, "2012", the magic world-end date is December 21, 2012. According to "The Complete Idiots' Guide to 2012" (yes, there is a book by that title), there are more than 600,000 websites devoted to this theme.

Also in theaters was "The Book of Eli", a post-apocalyptic tale in which a man fights his way across America in order to protect a sacred book that holds the secrets to saving humankind. There is a sacred book that holds the secrets to saving humankind, but I doubt it's this one.

Remember Y2K? Some predicted the world would shut down at the start of 2000. Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" novels had many believing that the rapture (when believers will be taken up to heaven) was near. Before LaHaye, there was the 1970s, "The Late, Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey, predicting end times. Then there was "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988". That also came in a 1989 edition. Go figure.

If I sound a bit indignant about all this, it's because I believe too many people are guilty of majoring in a minor when it comes to end times. It's easy to get caught up in looking for signs. People of every generation have awaited the end of time and the destruction of the earth. This is in spite of the fact that Jesus, the ultimate authority on such things, has already told us that no one knows when that day and hour will be (Mark 13:32). That hasn't kept authors from cranking out novels based on this theme.

Personally, I'd rather go to the account of the apocalypse found at the end of our Bible, especially the passage of scripture found in Revelations 7:16-17: "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." It's a shame that every apocalyptic thriller can't end like that.

This world will come to an end some day. Nothing in this universe lasts forever. If God wills it, the end could be today. What the Bible truly says about the future is this: God is in control of the future and God will not forsake God's children regardless of what may come. This is a scary world, but this is also God's world. We don't know what the future may hold, but we know Who holds the future.

Yes, Christ told us He would return someday, but that should be a reason for great joy, not anxiety. In the meantime, we have all kinds of very real obstacles in the real world we have to face every day.