

Billy is six years old. This (card) represents his self-esteem. It's actually pretty big for a six-year old. One morning Billy woke up. The first person he saw was his big brother Tommy who shared the bedroom. Tommy watched Billy get dressed and told him how fat he was getting to be, and that he was nothing but a slob (tear). On the way to the kitchen he saw his father, who told him, "Good morning, your shirt's dirty, Billy. Go back upstairs and change (tear)." During breakfast his mother told him to quit playing with his food and it's about time for him to start growing up like his brother Tommy (tear). When he arrived at school one of the bigger kids took his math book and threw it across the playground (tear). In the classroom his teacher made him go back to the door and walk to his desk more quietly (tear). Before he pledges allegiance to the flag, Billy has lost allegiance to himself. His self-esteem is gone, used up for the day.

The example is a simple one, but adults have similar experiences. We lose our free time; people we love turn against us; an accident happens on the way to work, and all our personal securities are destroyed.

There are two cycles in life: a cycle of chaos and a cycle of order. Most people can look back on their lives and see several periods of each. Most people will also discover that periods of chaos last longer than periods of order.

To survive chaos, people need to cope. And many people cope poorly. Some will indulge themselves in overeating, masturbation, or laziness. Some will turn to violence, hurling verbal abuse or physical abuse at others, or taking advantage of them. Some will lie and gossip, putting others down in order to elevate themselves.

The goal, of course, is to get back to order, but many times the chaos is beyond our control. So what do you do? I think the question to ask is "What gives order to my life? What gives me peace?" Then pursue that, pursue at least that much. For many, personal prayer is an obvious source of comfort. But another one is to reach out to the needy. This one takes more effort, but its rewards are endless. A visit to the sick or to shut-ins, for example, can give us a better outlook on the chaos in our lives.

Jesus talks today about the end. Everybody wants to know about the end. When will it come? What will it be like? How can we prepare ourselves? What he says is, the end will be chaos. You will suffer many trials. And if that isn't enough, in the midst of your personal suffering, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed its light, stars will fall out of the skies and the heavenly hosts will be shaken. In short, like Billy (pieces), your day will get off to a bad start. But the message of Christ is that order will follow chaos as day follows night. The Son of Man will complete what he began. He will bring salvation. He is our hope.

When your life is in chaos, seek order, and you will find Christ.