

RELIGION PAGE COLUMN

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STANDING TOGETHER

By

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One of my favorite movies of all time is “Gladiator.”

And my favorite scene in that movie is the one where Maximus, the hero, is standing in the arena in Rome with about a dozen other gladiators, all armed with swords and shields and not knowing what is going to happen to them.

The Roman announcer says to the rowdy audience that they are about to witness a reenactment of the defeat of Carthage at the hands of the Roman Legions under Scipio Africanus. Hearing that, the gladiators become very pensive and look at the giant doors from which their adversaries are about to emerge.

As the blood thirsty crowd cheers, Maximus asks the gladiators which of them have ever served in the army. A few indicate that they have. Then he says something like this: “Then you know this -- that whatever comes out of those doors, we stand a better chance of surviving if we work together.”

They instantly recognize the truth of that statement and they step back, close ranks, lock their shields together and form a phalanx, the impenetrable wall that the Roman Legions used to conquer most of the known world.

A few minutes later the gladiators stand victorious in the center of the arena having overcome armored war horses and scythe wielding chariots to defeat an army of more than double their number. It’s an adrenaline filled scene and the college students that were watching it in the theater with me came out of their seats cheering for Maximus and his gladiators.

I thought of this scene on Tuesday of this week as I sat with the Economic Task Force and we pounded away at the work before us, trying to retain jobs for our county and trying to mitigate the impact of losing the jobs we can’t retain.

One by one the leaders of the various committees stood and made their reports. One report was that DHL, who had originally said that their agreement with UPS would be a done deal by August, is now saying that they are going to try to have a deal completed by the end of the year.

And that led me to think about what we went through last week after the hurricane hit, and of some friends of mine who were told that their power would be restored in a couple of days, then in a week, and now, hopefully, by October.

It's like we're standing in the middle of the arena facing two doors. Painted on one is, "the weather" and on the other is "the economy." And we don't know what's going to come out of either door.

What we do know, however, is what Maximus knew. "We stand a lot better chance of surviving if we work together."

"How good and pleasant it is," says the Psalm 133, "for kindred to dwell together in unity!"

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