

Scripture Study

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B



Opening prayer

Daniel 12:1-3

(Psalm 16:5,8-11)

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

Overview of the Gospel:

- This is the last reading from the Gospel of Mark as this liturgical year approaches a close. After next Sunday's Solemnity of Christ the King begins Advent, the season of the liturgical year that is a time of waiting for Our Lord's coming at Christmas—and at the end of time.
- In this Sunday's Gospel reading, it is now Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus has just predicted the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (Mark 13:1-2), a prediction that would come to pass some 40 years later—a generation—in the year 70 AD at the hands of the Romans. For the Jews of Jesus' time, this was an extremely distressing prophecy. The destruction of the Temple would be, in effect, the end of their religious and social world, as they knew it. His disciples ask him privately when this will happen and what the sign of this will be (Mark 13:3).
- He answers their two questions in what is called the "Olivet Discourse" because this discussion takes place on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem (verse 3). This Sunday's Gospel is his answer to their second question. Even as his words about the Temple signaled an end to a world, in a secondary but real way it is a prediction about the end of *our* world, either at our own deaths or at his Second Coming, whichever comes first.

Questions:

- The 1st Reading from Daniel implies that the Kingdom of God is assured to the faithful and wise, but that it comes through discernment and tribulation. How is this borne out in the teachings of Jesus as found in the Gospel Readings?
- Do you live your life as if you were "consecrated", i.e., being made holy (see 2nd Reading, verse 14)? Why or why not? In what ways is God calling you to practice greater holiness?
- How are we to understand Jesus' warnings about cosmic disturbances (verses 24-25)? Compare with Isaiah 13:10-13, Ezekiel 32:7, Amos 8:9, Joel 2:28-32, and Acts 2:14-21. What do all the events related to these verses have in common?
- To who does the title "son of Man" in verse 26 refer to (see Daniel 7:13)?
- How does the "fig tree" lesson (verses 28-29) answer the disciple's question from verse 4? (see also Mark 11:12-14, 20-21)
- What promises does Jesus give in verses 30-31? How would this comfort (or *discomfort*) the disciples? What impact do these promises have on you?
- How can we prepare our hearts and minds in daily conversion for that time when Jesus "will come again to judge the living and the dead" (*Nicene Creed*)?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 673, 474

Closing prayer

Let us not put off from one moment to another what we should do because the next moment is not yet ours. —St. Padre Pio

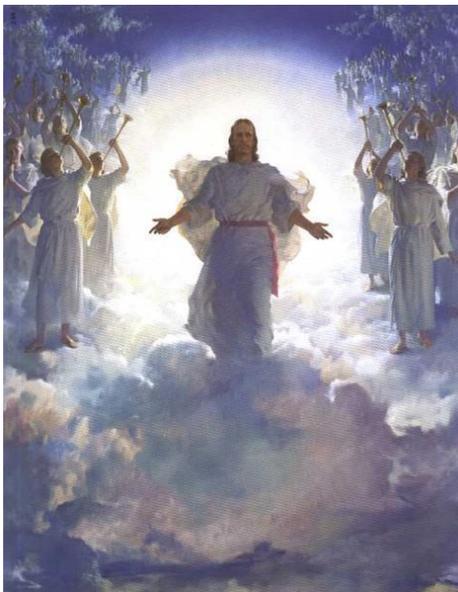
Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"The Son of man coming with great glory"

Scripture: *Mark 13:24-32*

Meditation: How good are you at reading signs? The people of Jesus' time expected that the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by extraordinary signs and wonders. Jesus' first coming was clouded in mystery and wonderment – a son of David born in a cave at Bethlehem, magi from the East guided by a star to worship the newborn king of Israel, a carpenter miracle-worker who gave sight to the blind and raised the dead, a Suffering Servant who bore the sins of many upon a cross, a Risen Lord who stormed the gates of Hell to release its captives. Jesus on a number of occasions prophesied that he would return again at the end of the world to finish the work he came to accomplish through his death and resurrection. The image of a "Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" is taken from the vision of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13-14). Daniel's vision is a royal investiture of a human king before God's throne. This king, whose authority comes from God, is given world-wide ruler-ship and power which lasts forever. The Jews of Jesus' day were looking for a Messianic king who would free them from foreign oppression. Jesus tells them that when he returns he will establish a universal kingdom of peace, righteousness, and justice for all.

Jesus' prophetic description of the end of time and the Day of Judgment was not new to the people of Israel. The prophets had foretold these events many centuries before. "*Behold the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with*



wrath and fierce anger to make the earth a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it" (Isaiah 13:9-13; see also Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18). Jesus speaks of the second coming as a known fact, a for certain event we can expect to take place. This coming will be marked by signs that all will recognize; signs which will strike terror in those unprepared and wonder in those who are ready to meet the Lord. When the Lord returns he will establish justice and righteousness and he will vindicate all who have been faithful to him. His judgment is a sign of hope for those who trust in him.

What lesson does the Lord Jesus want us to learn from the parable of the budding fig tree? The fig tree was a common and important source of food for the Jews. It bore fruit twice a year, in the autumn and in the early spring. The prophet Joel mentions its fruit-bearing as a sign of favor from the Lord (Joel 2:22). The Talmud said that the first fruit came the day after Passover. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came he would usher in the kingdom of

God at Passover time. This parable foretells the joy of God's kingdom – the joy of new life and the promise of a new age of peace and blessing. The signs of spring are evident for all who can see. Just so are the signs of God's kingdom. The "budding" of God's kingdom begins first in the hearts of those who are receptive to God's word. Those who trust in God's word will bear the fruits of his kingdom. And what are the fruits of that kingdom? "The kingdom of God .is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

We do not know the day or hour when the Lord will return again in glory. But the Lord does give us signs, not only to "wake us up" as a warning, but also to "rouse our spirits" to be ready and eager to see his kingdom come in all its power and glory. The Lord wants us to be filled with joyful anticipation for his coming again. He surely comes to us each day and speaks to our hearts like a lover who whispers in the ear of the beloved. As he promised, the Lord will surely come again in all his glory. Do you look for the signs pointing to the Lord's return and do you pray that he come quickly to establish peace and justice on the earth?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all history, and the lord of all creation. Give me joyful hope and confidence that I will see you face to face when you return in glory"

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