

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 158

Reading I - Dn 12:1-3

In those days, I Daniel, heard this word of the Lord: "At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people: it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. "But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

Responsorial Psalm - Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11 - R. (1) You are my inheritance, O Lord!

Reading II - Heb 10:11-14, 18

Brothers and sisters: Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.

Gospel - Mk 13:24-32

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Homily – It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine... why you feel fine about it is really important!

The readings this weekend speak about the final coming of Jesus and the ensuing judgement. But they also point us toward the reconciliation that's possible while we live, through Christ, who became the one sacrifice that takes away sin as well as the one High Priest who offers the sacrifice. Finally, in the Gospel, we are reminded that to ignore the warnings of God or live-in denial of their truth, to know them and to not listen to Christ and do what he says... is to experience everlasting torment separated from God.

Although Jesus can come back in any manner he likes, even literally as we have these descriptions in scripture, but the apocalyptic language in the first reading and the Gospel is not really meant to literally describe future events, as much as it is to paint a realistic picture of how our experience of God's judgement will be horrifying if we not embraced salvation. The first half of today's Gospel leans heavily on traditional language and ideas from the Old Testament which uses the known cosmic disturbances about the sun, moon and stars as a way of talking about the manifestations of God's judgment of Israel. In Mark's time, the belief in the power of the stars was very strong. That these celestial bodies which other nations believed controlled history would be shown to be helpless under the power of God.

The only way to avoid eternal separation from God, is to live today and every day in his love and service. No matter who we are or what we believe, how we live the present determines the future. The children of God, having heard and embraced the saving knowledge of God, are expected to live fully in the present what we believe so as to live forever united with God forever. If we are doing our best to love God and our Neighbor then it doesn't matter to us when Christ comes, we will be ready.

God's patience is directed toward salvation. Precisely because of his deep love for us and as a reminder of that endless love, God has provided us with a period of immense grace. We all have the temptation, seeing all the evil and suffering in the world, to ask Our Lord why he hasn't returned to clean house already. Why does the Lord put up with all this sin? Peter answers that question in his second epistle: "consider the patience of our Lord as salvation" (2 Peter 3:15). Our Lord wants to give every sinner, every human being, a chance to be reconciled with God. We need to pray as much for the conversion of the lost souls as we do that the Lord may "deliver us from our trespasses." We are living in the age of the Church, the last period of salvation history, during which time the saving grace of God has gradually spread throughout the world and the powers of evil, though increasing through time, desperately and unsuccessfully battle against God's saving power. At the end of the age, whenever that comes, Christ will return and bring all human history to its end. When he comes, it is "game over" for sinners. Let's pray and actively work for the salvation of all and for lasting reconciliation between God and His children... with patience and perseverance.

Christ knows that the battle between good and evil will continue throughout human history. Because he knows us, and knows that we grow weary, get distracted, lose passion, fall to temptations in our weakness, he is sometimes very clear and challenges us with the truth of eternal damnation. Reminding us about our choices and their cost, gives us a chance to organize our lives accordingly, to build our lives on the everlasting rock of Christ our Savior. He wants us to clearly understand what's at stake so as to ensure we are vigilant, persistent, faithful to the end and ready to welcome him. "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come." Jesus doesn't speak about these events to scare us, but in order to motivate us. It is so easy to fall into a purely natural outlook on life, getting so wrapped up in our daily to-do lists that we forget the big picture, and we neglect our friendship with Christ. Jesus knows that nothing could be worse for our happiness, now and forever – and that is what interests him most.

In the creed that we profess together every Sunday we say, "he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his Kingdom will have no end." In practical terms, what does living with this clear awareness really mean? What does it mean to "be watchful," or, as today's Psalm puts it, to "set the Lord ever before" us and "keep him at our right hand" so that we will not be "disturbed."

- Make your personal relationship with God a true priority through daily prayer, ongoing study of our faith, and frequent reception of the sacraments.
- Share with others the good news of salvation, Jesus died not only for those of us who are here today, but also for those who aren't. If we don't tell them the message of Christ, who will?
- Follow Christ's example in your daily lives. Every single day he gives us opportunities to learn to follow his example.