

# Scripture Study

First Sunday of Advent—Cycle C



## Opening prayer

Jeremiah 33:14-16

(Psalm 25:4-5,8-10,14)

1 Thess 3:12—4:2

**Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday begins the Liturgical Season of Advent. It marks the beginning of the Church calendar, and begins a new cycle of the Scripture readings we hear at Mass. Advent is the season where the Church is in preparation for the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah, both at his first coming at Christmas, and toward his Second Coming at the end of time.
- **Note:** This Sunday's gospel is part of parallel account from the gospel of two weeks ago (Mark 13). Verses 29-33, not included in today's reading, is the parable of the fig tree we heard then.
- Jesus is in the middle of his "Olivet Discourse" (Luke 21:5-38), answering the two questions of the disciples on when the Temple will be destroyed and what the signs would be of his Second Coming (Mark 13:1-4).
- While in this discourse, Jesus combines the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem with those of his Second Coming, this reading is primarily understood as being concerned with being prepared for Jesus' coming at the end of time.
- The point Jesus wants us to remember is not so much the signs themselves but what our reaction should be (verse 28) and what we should do until then (verses 34, 36).

## Questions:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading from the prophet Jeremiah, we hear about God's promise of redemption for his people. What does it mean to be "redeemed"? Where have you experienced God's redemption in your own life, or seen God's redemption in the lives of others? What is it about God's character that allows you to trust in "a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11)?
- When Paul talks about love in verses 12 and 13 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, about what kind of love is he speaking? How does this kind of love function? Why can only God make this love increase and overflow? How has the Lord caused love to increase in your own life?
- In verses 25-28 of the Gospel Reading, which event (the coming of the end or Jerusalem's destruction) is primarily in view? What do the two events have in common?
- What is significant about the way the Son of man will come (verse 27. See Daniel 7:13-14)? What should be the attitude of believers when they see the Son of man coming (verse 28)?
- How could the promises of verses 32-33 have been a comfort to the disciples? A discomfort? What impact do they have on you?
- How does the present cultural climate encourage your heart to become sleepy (verse 34)? What is Jesus calling on you to do about that?
- In the midst of this heavy news, how does Jesus comfort his followers (verses 34-36)? What will you do this week to become better at watching and praying?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 672, 2612, 2725, 2742-2745**

## Closing prayer

*There are three distinct comings of the Lord of which I know: His coming to men, His coming into men, and His coming against men. —St. Bernard*

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "Look up, your redemption is drawing near"

**Gospel Reading:** *Luke 21:25-28,34-36*

**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 a vision which God gave to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13-14). God showed Daniel a royal investiture of a human king before God's throne. This king was invested with God's authority and was given rulership over the whole earth. His reign would last for all ages.

The Jews of Jesus' day were looking for a Messianic king who would free them from foreign oppression. Jesus is both Son of David –the rightful heir and King of Israel who will rule forever – and the Son of man – God's appointed ruler who will establish a universal kingdom of peace, righteousness, and justice for all the nations and peoples of the earth. The Lord Jesus gives us the gift of hope – the supernatural strength and perseverance to remain steadfast and confident in God's promise. What can we confidently expect from God? He promises us the hope of heaven, everlasting life, peace, and joy with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He also promises to right every wrong, to vindicate all who have been treated unjustly, to remove every tear, sorrow, and pain, including death itself (Revelation 21:4). The world around us is plagued with fear, uncertainty,



greed, selfishness, strife, and division. It has lost hope in God and in his promise to restore the human race and creation itself through the second coming of his Son Jesus Christ.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the day when God would send his Messiah King to "execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 33:15). Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise and every promise God has made.

Many Christian churches in the East and West, since the early first centuries, have marked special seasons to celebrate the central truths of the Christian faith. The Advent season which precedes Christmas and Epiphany reminds us that we are a pilgrim people, aliens and exiles in this age who long for our true home with God in heaven, and who await with joyful hope for the return of the Lord Jesus. When will all these promises take place? No one knows the day when Christ will return. But it is a certain fact that we are living in the end times, the close of this present age! The end times begin with the first coming of Christ (his Incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas) and culminates in his final return on the Day of Judgment.

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 final justice and righteousness over the earth by overthrowing his enemies and by vindicating those who have been faithful to him. The anticipation of his final judgment is a sign of hope for all who trust in him.

What can keep us from recognizing the signs which await the coming of the Lord? Indifference and the temptation to slacken off – to become passive and lethargic or to fall asleep spiritually. It is very easy to get caught up in the things of the present moment or to be weighed down with troubles. The Lord knows our shortcomings and struggles and he gives us the grace to bear our burdens and to walk in his way of holiness. But there is one thing he doesn't tolerate: an attitude of indifference, being passive, not caring, and doing nothing when we could be actively seeking God and his kingdom! God is ready to give us fresh vision, hope, and grace to walk in his ways. He wants to work in and through us for his glory. That is why he expects more of us than we can do by ourselves. His grace enables us to actively watch for his action in our lives, and to actively pray for perseverance and endurance when we face trials and difficulties. The Lord gives us strength to overcome temptation, especially from apostasy – the denial of Christ out of fear or pride. God is ever ready to fill us with his grace, strength, and power. Is your heart hungry for God or is it weighed down by other things?

*"Lord Jesus, may I never lose sight of the signs of your presence in my life and the world around me. Free me from dullness of heart, indifference, and every distraction that would keep me from your presence. May I never tire of seeking you in prayerful anticipation of seeing you face to face*