

## The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Nov. 13-14, 2021

“In those days after the tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”

This weekend in readings we encounter a style of writing called apocalyptic. It is a form of writing that comes forth in times of great suffering or crisis and its purpose is to encourage those who are suffering to persevere and to assure them that God is still in control of the world and that God’s grace and power will be victorious in the end.

Today’s first reading from Daniel was written for the people of Israel at a time described as “unsurpassed in distress” as they were being cruelly persecuted and put death for their faith by the Greeks who had control of the countries of the Middle East at that time about 160 years before Christ.

Another example of apocalyptic writing that we are more familiar with is the Book of Revelation at the end of the New Testament which was written when the newly formed Christian Church was being greatly persecuted by both the Roman Empire and the Jews.

Mark in the gospel today includes words of Jesus that also have an apocalyptic tone to them as Jesus speaks about the end time that is coming for this world.

Already at the time of Mark’s writing of the Gospel there was persecution of the early Christian Church by the Romans and Jews. These words would have been encouragement to the audience he was writing his gospel for.

**However**, Jesus, in the words of today’s gospel, is also warning us and reminding that there will be an end to this life for all of humanity, and an end to the earth and at that time he will return in glory and gather all the faithful into the kingdom of heaven.

At this time in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is in Jerusalem. The end of his public ministry is near. In the coming days he will celebrate the Last Supper with his apostles, then

suffer death on the cross and then be raised to glory three days later.

Before these events happen, Jesus speaks with great seriousness about the end of days. When all will seem lost, he says, the Son of Man will come in glory. He applies the imagery of the Son of Man found in the Book of Daniel to himself. In this end time of life on earth he has come to us, and he will come again in glory.

We might well ask -- when will this happen so that we might be prepared? In answer, Jesus turns to fig tree. He does not speak of its destruction, as we might suppose. Rather, he gives us a word of consolation. When the leaves of the tree are sprouting, we know that summer is near. Summer is not a time of darkness but of light. It is a time not of death but of new life. Jesus tells the crowds that this generation will not pass away before summer has come.

We Christians know what Jesus is referring to. The cross is the great revelation of Jesus as the Son of Man. Out of the darkness of human sin and violence, the great love and mercy of God has shone forth. Jesus suffered, died and rose again, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

We do not know when this will take place. Therefore we must take Jesus words seriously to keep ourselves prepared either for his coming to take us from this world or his coming in glory. Yes, the world will pass away, but the words of Jesus will not. We the Church must reflect on whether we are prepared to receive our Lord at the end of time or not. Do we take the Gospel seriously?

When we read or hear the apocalyptic writing in the Bible dealing with the end of times, we might become fearful. We might ask how can anyone hope to be worthy to enter into God's eternal glory? The Good News is that Jesus' words have not passed away. They are spoken every day in our churches and written in all our bibles. So there is still time to change, to watch and to wait for the coming of the Lord.

The good news of the second reading from Hebrews is its reminder that it is not our own doing that brings about salvation. Instead, it is Jesus by his life, death and resurrection who has conquered sin and death and offers us his own life and light that we might enter the joys of his salvation. This reading tells us that Jesus, our High Priest has offered one sacrifice for sins, and in this one offering has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated or growing in union with Christ.

When we focus on our own actions we might easily be discouraged. On our own, we are not perfect, not sinless, not holy. It is only when we are united with the sacrifice of Christ that is made present for us at each Mass that we become perfected in his all-encompassing love. All that is required of us is our acceptance of being transformed by life in Christ and our commitment to follow him as his disciples.

Today's psalm assures us that when we do this, we have nothing to fear, for the Lord is our inheritance. And what an inheritance God has planned for his faithful ones!

The Church year comes to a close next week. The year-end readings remind us that, even when all things fall apart, the restoration of all things is just around the corner.