

November 25, 2018  
1st Sunday of Advent  
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

[Jesus said to his disciples:] "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

#### Background:

The gospels of Matthew (24:3-44), Mark (13:3-37) and Luke (21:7-36) each contain a place where the disciples marvel at the beauty of the Temple of Jerusalem and Jesus predicts its destruction. The disciples inquire when this event will happen. Jesus responds by telling them that before this takes place, they will experience catastrophic events within creation, and human disasters, and they will suffer persecution and death. This description of future events in each of the synoptic gospels is known as a "little apocalypse." Two weeks ago, on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, the gospel was a portion of Mark's "little apocalypse." Today's text comes from Luke's gospel.

Scripture scholars generally agree that Luke drew upon Mark's gospel. However, while Mark wrote before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Luke wrote approximately 15 years after the Romans razed it. Luke tries to separate what has already happened from what is yet to come. The fall of the temple was emotionally disheartening for the Jews. Luke thus points to a much more vital event yet to come, which will be signaled by cosmic disturbances. These signs will signal the coming of Christ as Judge of the World.

The modern reader might hear the warning against giving in to carousing and the anxieties of daily life, and presume that Luke is addressing a social situation not very different from our own. However, Luke's Christian community was a small splinter group of the larger Jewish community. In addition, most of the people of the day lived in dire poverty, wondering if they would have enough to make it through to the next day. They did not have the wealth to be concerned about getting drunk or be preoccupied with worldly possessions. When Luke addresses those who might be tempted to give in to drunkenness and the anxiety of the day, he is speaking to a very select group of people who are not only wealthy but also greedy. They are those who refuse to share the resources with those in need. In Luke's day these people lived without honor. Luke is reminding his community that when Jesus returns, the whole of creation will be changed, and each person will stand before the Son of Man as an equal. There will be no privileged!

#### Reflection Questions:

1. Recalling times of personal waiting, I...
2. When I was young, these days between Thanksgiving and Christmas were...
3. At this point in my life, change brings with it a sense of...
4. Luke tells the community of Christians that they should stand erect and raise their heads at the coming of Jesus. When have you prayed standing erect with your head raised?
5. When I consider people who live from day to day...
6. From the perspective of the Jews, God seemed to delay sending the messiah, and to the Christians, God seems to have delayed the return of Jesus. What do you think God wants to teach us by the experience of waiting?
7. How might you approach this season of Advent in a way that might open you to grace found in waiting?
8. Can you talk with God now about how you feel about waiting, or your attitude toward the changes taking place within your life, or changes in the world around you?

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### **Excerpts from the readings for December 2, 2018, the First Sunday of Advent**

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise  
I made to the house of Israel and Judah.

In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot;  
he shall do what is right and just in the land.

In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;  
this is what they shall call her: "The Lord our justice."

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior, and for you I wait all the day.  
Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice,  
and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the Lord are  
kindness and constancy toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees.  
The friendship of the Lord is with those who fear him, and his covenant, for their instruction.

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love  
for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts,  
to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones.  
Finally, brothers and sisters, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that,  
as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God  
and as you are conducting yourselves you do so even more.  
For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars,  
and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves.  
People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world,  
for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming  
in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen,  
stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.  
"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness  
and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.  
For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth.  
Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength  
to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

**Excerpts from Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:4-14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; and Luke 21:25-36**

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