

Commentary on the Gospel: With a Loving Heart

Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent (Year C), and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 21:25-28, 34-36*)

“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on 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. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Commentary

Advent is beginning, the liturgical time preparing us for Christmas. The Gospel for this first Sunday presents us with part of Christ's eschatological

discourse in Jerusalem during the final days of his life.

Our Lord invites us to raise our sights and open our hearts to receive him. Advent leads us to Christmas, and from there, to the hope of the glorious second coming of Christ. He calls us to a personal encounter with him. Each day he calls us; each day he wants to draw us out of our darkness, our fears, our discouragement and disappointment.

This Sunday's Gospel teaches us two ways of living on earth: with our head held high or with our heart clouded in darkness. We Christians are called to live with our eyes raised to heaven, knowing we are children of our Father God, who is infinite Love. We are called to discover the greatness of our daily life, of God's love that surrounds us in all our daily circumstances, in our family, in

our work and rest, in our friendships.

Christ gives us his light, his strength, his life to enable us to discover him in everything we do. There he awaits us, to fill us with his grace, with his way of living and loving.

But often we live with our heart clouded in darkness. Our problems and difficulties, our miseries and weaknesses, our fears and deceptions, our selfishness and pride seem to enclose us in ourselves. We try to satisfy our deepest desires for happiness, for abundant and overflowing life, with food that never satiates us because deep down we are seeking ourselves.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives the key to live each day with our head held high. He tells us to stay awake and pray. We need to fight against the drowsiness that is always trying to overcome us, to trap us in our own

concerns, in our own problems and sorrows. It is a drowsiness that turns our capacity to love and be loved into lethargy, that impedes us from enjoying life, that obscures what is most beautiful in it: the beauty of creation, the faces of our loved ones, tranquil conversation, time spent with our friends. We lose the best thing of all: the real presence of God and those around us. And we end up filling ourselves with sadness and boredom, lamenting and complaining about everything.

We need to stay awake in order to see beyond ourselves: to see God watching over us, and to see where he wants to lead us, his dreams of love for us and for this world of ours. We need to stay awake in order to probe the depths of our own heart: to grasp how and for whom I truly want to spend my life.

Besides calling us to stay awake, our Lord asks us to pray. He asks us to raise our eyes to heaven, so that in each time of prayer Christ may redirect our thoughts and hearts to him, so that he may satisfy our deepest longings for happiness.

We await him with our heads raised high, always praying, so that he can draw us out of our petty concerns, so that he can open our heart to the others and enable us to look at them with a loving heart.