

November 29th 2020

Mk 13:24-37

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven... (Mk 13:24-25a).

Excellent. First suffering and then disaster. That is a perspective that makes hopeful. Whoever created our lectionary decided to put a Gospel text for today, the first Sunday of Advent, the season of yearning for light, that predicts that the light of the sun, the moon and the stars will darken. Instead of hope for light, we read about a big heavenly energy saving-program in a season when the light becomes less naturally, and in a time when things look darker anyway because of this year's events.

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory (Mk 13:26).

Phew... Lucky us! The whole thing with God turning off the lights of the sun, the moon and the stars will turn out to be simply a dramatic effect to make the second coming of Christ a bit more dramatic. Our movie making experts here in the parish would probably have something to say about that but that is what is written.

Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds... (Mk 13:27a).

Quite unpractical to first turn the lights off and then let the poor angels search in darkness...

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Mk 13:31).

Heaven and earth will pass away. When has this last sounded so real as it does this year. It seems as heaven and earth were trembling and passing away. This advent is quite different from what most of us are used to. Christmas will be different.

But God's word, God's promise will not stumble and fall.

Today's Gospel passage is from ch. 13 in the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark has 16 chapters, so it is not from the beginning. This story is not a Christmas story about the coming of Christ in his birth. It is talking about the Second Coming of Christ.

Christians believe that at the first Christmas, God became human in Jesus and bridged that gap between the Creator of all and God's creatures, us humans. In Jesus' healing and teaching on earth, people felt the presence of God like never before and the Kingdom of God finally took room among us. But it has not yet come completely. We are still yearning for the heavenly peace and God's justice and love for all human beings, all creatures and for creation itself.

Your Kingdom come, we pray.

Advent is a ritual time of waiting, of hoping, preparation and anticipation for the Advent (the coming).

And this ritual of Advent and Christmas is an interesting phenomenon. We celebrate it every year. We believe Christmas happened 2000 years ago but we actualize it every year as if hadn't happened. By doing that, we keep our hope and faith alive that Christ will come again to finish God's work he has begun here among us and that Christians continue continually.

This time of pandemic has become quite a spiritual time for some.

More time at home means for some that they have more time for prayer, contemplation, silent walks in nature etc.

Some people use the new possibilities to join worship around the world and join zoom prayer groups, the Canterbury Cathedral Morning Prayer or online events in their own parishes. So some people have experience something like a spiritual revival or growth.

For others, this time feels like a spiritual void. Online services don't work for everyone, the special quality of God's presence where there are 2 or 3 gathered in God's name is harder to sense for some people when we are not gathered in person, the uplifting spirit of singing together, the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ physically, the hard pews, the standing, kneeling... all that is part of a worship experience that is lost at the moment.

As a result, some people feel less connected with God and their faith communities, while others feel that connection now more than in the business of pre-pandemic life.

Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly (Mk 13:35-36).

This is God's call for us in Advent, especially for those of us like me who are having troubles to feel equally awake spiritually these days. Keep spiritually awake!

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Mk 13:31).

God is faithful also now. And especially now it is so important to foster our relationship with God. No matter how big our bubble can be by Health Orders, there is always space for God in your bubble.

But let's help each other, especially the ones who feel a spiritual revival the ones who feel a spiritual void. Let us help each other to keep awake. Let us pray for each other, let's pray together on the phone, on zoom or united in Spirit.

For Christ will come again and the Light will win.

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory (Mk 13:26).

Keep awake!