

Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

“(25) 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. (26) People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (27) And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (28) But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.”

(34) “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. (35) For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. (36) 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.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context:*** The context for this passage is essentially Luke 21:5-24. We can often feel uncomfortable with ‘end times’ texts as they may remind us of our contemporary dramatic apocalyptic preachers. At the same time we cannot ignore the fact that Jesus described the Second Coming to His followers in relative detail and did not shy away from telling them about it more than once. We see this passage more clearly in the context of Jesus’ description of the destruction of the Temple (vs. 5-6) and the question that arises among the disciples in response to this; “When will this happen and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” (vs. 7). Jesus responds with a list of signs (plural) that they can expect to see. Jesus does not promise to “airlift” them out of the trauma and difficulties of the end times, but He does promise that God will help them prepare and that God will give them the strength to endure the trials as they ask for it. Jesus wants them to focus on their own personal preparation, for the sake of their own salvation and also so that they may be witnesses to others during the end times. Ten years prior to the writing of this gospel the temple was destroyed, along with the city and all its people. Given the context in which this text was being first read, the early readers of this gospel would have had a sober perspective on the truthfulness of Jesus’ words.
- 2) Verses 25 and 26 describe the shaking of the heavens and the earth and then again the heavens. In that day and age, people made a direct correlation between the order in the heavens and the order here on earth (such was the role of astronomers, like the three wise men). This text reveals that once the powers of the heavens are clearly shaken so will the people be, they will “faint from fear”. The people who are fainting from fear are those who were unaware of these events, and those who had placed most of their faith in the ‘science of the stars’ (e.g. things they can see) instead of in God. Who are those people today? In what ways can we be like them, for example, having little awareness of what Jesus describes in this text and sometimes leaning on the world/science, things that are ‘known’ more than on God?
- 3) Everyone will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power. This event will be unmistakable to all. It will be visible to everyone in the world at the same time, no one will miss it. How does the wide-spread nature of this event speak to God’s Mercy on all humankind?
- 4) Verse 28 describes how the believers in Christ are to respond to this event, “When these events begin to occur, straighten up, raise up your heads, because your

liberation is at hand.” This is quite a starkly different response than those who are fainting from fear. Jesus knows that His followers will be standing tall at that time and will raise their heads in hopeful expectation of greeting their Savior rather than cowering in fear. In what ways, does knowing Christ, knowing His Word, knowing His Love for you help you to stand tall with hopeful expectation in all circumstances? How does the preparation of the believers help them to stand tall?

5) Verses 34-38 describe the vigilance that is required of those who follow Jesus. He warns all His disciples to be ready. Jesus outlines three things that will compromise our watchfulness; 1) dissipation (mental distraction, devotion to pleasure), 2) drunkenness, and 3) the worries of this life.

1) Dissipation- (Greek: kraipale—a word that is used to describe the nausea resulting from drunkenness)- Modern dictionary definition- ‘indulging in extravagant, intemperate or dissolute pleasure’ or ‘a process in which energy is used or lost without accomplishing useful work’ ---How are we tempted in our current culture to fall into this trap?

2) Drunkenness- dulled inhibitions, dulled judgment, inability to use one’s full physical or mental capacities, escaping pain or reality. We do not need alcohol or drugs in order to get drunk or high. We can be intoxicated by power, sex, ambition, hatred, pleasures or obsessions. In what ways do we allow ourselves to be intoxicated and distracted by these things?

3) Worries of this life- Worry is the opposite of faith. “Martha, Martha, you are distracted with so many things.” In what ways can we allow ourselves to be disproportionately distracted by the worries of every day life; how will I pay this bill? When will my kid grow up? When will my spouse stop doing that? How can I avoid a particular situation?

6) Jesus has a remedy for the human heart that can become ‘drowsy’ by the dissipation, drunkenness and worries of this life. Jesus’ remedy for this ‘dulled state’ is vigilance and PRAYER. What does it mean for you to remain vigilant and prayerful? Certain times of our lives require us to be vigilant in prayer (e.g. we maintain prayer vigil as we sit at the bedside of someone we love who is dying). How have those times of vigilance in prayer strengthened your prayer life and your relationship with God? Do we have established daily times for prayer? When is yours? How do you make sure that time with God is maintained each day?

7) Our prayers to God have power to change circumstances, but even when circumstances do not (or cannot) change, God calls us to pray for the specific *graces* that we need in order to endure the circumstances. What graces have you asked for lately? (e.g. faith, love, hope, perseverance, strength, courage, understanding, peace, joy)?