

YEAR B - THE YEAR OF MARK

THE HOLY GOSPEL

ADVENT 1 NOVEMBER 27, 2011



*The Holy Gospel is according to
St. Mark the thirteenth chapter.*

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said: "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, **25** and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. **27** Then he will send out the angels, and

gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. **34** It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **35** 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, **36** or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. **37** And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon - November 27, 2011

Year B - The Year of Mark - Advent 1

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark
13:24-37

We are all searching for something and not just the small things, like our house keys or a parking space. We are looking for the bigger things, deeper things, people, places, and relationships that we hope will fulfill us, bring us joy, and grant us peace.

Many people are searching for a job, but also more than a job, for the sense of purpose, value and security that the hoped-for job will bring. Many people are searching for wealth, but also more than just riches. They are searching for the sense of safety and freedom that we hope real wealth will bring. Many people are searching for relationships, but also more than Mr. or Mrs. Right. People search for the sense of fulfillment and flourishing we hope loving and being loved will bring. We are all searching for something or someone.

However, experience teaches us that the something or someone

for which we search is elusive. We photograph the perfect sunset, but when we look at the pictures later, it looks rather ordinary. When we find what we think we are looking for, we may find the experience leaves us unsatisfied.

Whether we realize it or not, God is what we are searing for all of our lives. The longed-for thing or person who will ultimately fulfill us, bring us joy, and grant us peace is God. Everything else, even the exquisitely true, good, and beautiful things of this life, will leave us unsatisfied at some level. Life is transient, and we continue our search for true fulfillment and flourishing and love.

In our gospel reading for today, Jesus tells his disciples to “keep awake.” This admonition comes at the end of a long apocalyptic discourse about the end times. Jesus and his disciples had left the temple, and he told them that someday it would be thrown down; not one stone would be left upon another. Shocked, the disciples ask when this will be. Jesus responds with a discourse that involves apocalyptic signs such as the sun being darkened and the stars falling like the heaven. It is all rather complex and confusing; but in the midst of it there is an assurance that someday the Son of Man will return to set things right.

This will be good news for some and bad news for others. We ought to prepare so that we can receive the coming of the Lord as good news. However, no one knows, not even the Son, when all these things will take place; but take place they will.

Therefore, Jesus says, keep awake, keep alert, and keep looking for the true Lord who will bring all things to fulfillment. There will be many pretenders, many people saying, “Look here is the messiah,” or “Look! There he is!” However, do not believe in these pretenders. They are false and they will let you down. Trust only in the true God. Trust the Lord of heaven and earth,

and his only Son. Keep awake for someday he will come.

Apocalyptic language is hard for us to understand today. The basic message is easy enough; Christ is coming to usher in his kingdom where there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

There will be many pretenders and false messiahs who will offer us the fulfillment only God can provide. Remember the allure of the perfect job, perfect wealth, or perfect relationship. All these things inevitably let us down because they cannot deliver the promises they make. They are good enough in themselves, but when we look to them as our ultimate source of truth and meaning, they inevitably let us down and leave us feeling unsatisfied. More than that, we can be damaged in the process: broken promises, broken relationships, broken hearts, or broken spirits.

Only God can truly fulfill us and the desires of the whole groaning universe. Jesus tells us to keep awake, to turn away from false messiahs, and to look for the coming of the true God. The Good News is that even as we flit about in our search for truth and meaning, God in his holiness and his graciousness is already racing to meet us. God is coming. The Son of Man is coming. Keep awake!

Advent is the season in the church year when we try to reflect on who or what we are truly searching for in our lives. It is a time to meditate and pray about what it is that will fulfill our hearts' desires. The Good News of Advent is that God is also searching for us. The story of Advent is not a story of a God waiting to see if we human beings will finally figure it out and find God. The story of Advent is that God comes to us, and better yet, that God has already found us.

We may feel like we are always looking for something or some-

one, but the Good News of Advent is that God has already come to us, is coming to us, and will keep coming to us. In our searching and seeking, we often fail to see that the gift has already been given, the gift of “God with us,” the gift of Emmanuel.

The word “advent” means “coming,” and that refers to the coming of Christ in the past, in the present, and in the future. Advent is saying that there is never a time when Christ is not with you, yesterday and today and tomorrow. At its deepest level, Advent is an invitation to give up our search and let ourselves be found by the God who came among us as child, by the God who comes into our wounds and suffering, by the God who will meet us in every future. In the search, in the finding, in the daily living of our lives, we have already been found and loved by the God who is with us always, even to the end of the ages.

The season of Advent begins today. It is the season of hope. Stay alert. Keep awake. Lift up your heads. Look to the horizon. Look to the future. Look for the God who comes to us, who came to us, who is with us, now and until the end of the ages. Amen.