



Luke 21:25-28.34-36

25 Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; **26** men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. **27** And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

34 'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly like a trap. **35** For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. **36** Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

Other readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16 Psalm 24 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

It may come as a surprise that on the first Sunday of Advent we are suddenly immersed in Luke's version of the long speech of Jesus concerning the future and the end of time. We just need to remember that in Advent we look forward both to the first coming of the Son of God in Bethlehem, and to his glorious return. Our gospel passage speaks of the Son of Man coming 'with power and great glory'. In the Creed we say 'He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.' What should our attitude to this coming be? Our gospel reading tells us.

There may be great horrors to witness and endure. We have seen plenty of these in recent years. Jesus tells us not to fear the violence of men, or the devastation nature can bring. Jesus tells us to 'stand erect and hold our heads high'. Jesus speaks of our coming 'liberation'. Since Jesus has conquered sin and death, and demonstrated that the love of God is stronger than both of these, we have no need to fear.

There is also some timely advice for our daily lives that our hearts should not be 'coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life'. Our faith in Jesus means that our very life-style will change and will challenge the values and behaviour of our contemporary society.

Finally, we are told to 'stay awake, praying at all times'. We do not know the day or the hour in which the Lord will call us. But as Christians, though we may still fear the process of death, we know that death is the gateway to eternal life.

Does my faith really inspire the whole of my life?

What is my attitude to the future and the end of my life on earth?

Let us pray for all those who are fearful today for whatever reason

Let us pray with the early Christians 'Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!'