



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 17th 2024**

Theme: "When you see these things happening, know that he is near."

Gathering Prayer

All: Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Mark 13:24-32

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, 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 And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And 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.

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 say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³² "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Gospel Focus

Jesus' description of the end times is a scary one, but also one of hope for those who strive to follow him. In its midst is an important reminder to *pay attention*. It is hard to imagine a scenario in which we would miss the signs Jesus describes—surely we would notice the sun being darkened and the stars falling from the sky. However, Jesus' reminder implies that we *could* miss it. And in ordinary lives, we often do miss all the manifold and subtle ways Jesus comes to us. Only those who are in the habit of noticing the fig tree will note its clues of an impending change of seasons. Only those who practice cultivating their attention will notice Jesus entering into their lives here and now.

Gospel Reflection

In the first reading and the gospel, two different biblical writers reflect on the end times. Both are writing for a people under duress, a people who may feel that the trials and

tribulations they are undergoing are the signs of the apocalyptic end time. Will there be something beyond this earthly life? The ancient Israelites thought not.

Some believed they would merely live on in the memories of their descendants. Some spoke of Sheol, the shadowy underworld in which a shade of the former self survived, but that is hardly an afterlife at all. It was only in the second century BCE that the belief in resurrection and an eternal reward for the righteous began to emerge. Daniel also mentions “everlasting horror and disgrace” for the wicked, but he focuses his attention on what happens to those who have lived wisely and who have led others to seek and do justice. He envisions these people as shining brightly, “like the splendor of the firmament... [they] shall be like the stars forever.”

Cosmologists tell us that our bodies are literally stardust made flesh; they are made of particles that were present in the primeval fireball at the beginning of the universe. Therefore, Daniel’s image of the righteous people becoming stars, in a sense, invites us to be true to what we actually are. His words give hope that those who endure tribulation not only tend the divine light within but also radiate goodness to others, increasing the brilliance of the divine radiance.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the days of final tribulation. They are terrible undoing of creation, an extinguishing of the light of the sun and the moon, with the stars falling from the sky. Against the backdrop of this cataclysm, Jesus interjects the assurance that he will come again in power and glory, gathering his elect from “the end of the earth to the end of the sky.” He then offers the image of a tender green shoot at springtime, one that insistently bursts forth from the fig tree. Stripped of its leaves, and giving every appearance of having died, its life tenaciously sprouts forth anew. Therefore, Jesus assures his disciples that no matter what horrendous suffering they endure, life will rise again in them through his power.

The question of when all this will take place hangs unanswered. There is a tension in the gospel. Jesus first says that it will happen in the lifetime of “this generation, but then he asserts that no one knows the day or the hour—not even he—but only the Father. In between the two sayings is the solid affirmation that Jesus’ words are trustworthy.

Speculation about the end time may not be foremost in believers’ minds these days. However, when we are experiencing tribulation, the question of how long it will go on and what will happen afterward is front and center. The readings today give hope that everlasting radiance and tender new beginnings come after refinement in the fiery furnace of suffering.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Daniel 12:1-3

¹ “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

R: You are my inheritance, O Lord!

O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot.
I set the Lord ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be

disturbed. **(R)**

Therefore, my heart is glad and my soul rejoices, my body, too, abides in confidence; because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption. **(R)**

You will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever. **(R)**

Second Reading — Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified... ¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

474. – By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.

673. – Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed".

Sharing and Discussion

1. As you reflect on verses 24-27 what feelings are generated; awe, fear, jubilation, wonder, doubt, etc.?
2. How should the promise, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" influence us today?
3. What affect, do you think, knowing the exact time of Jesus' return would have on people?
4. These readings speaks of the end times and give us a hint of the themes of the upcoming Advent season. How might you begin to prepare for a fruitful Advent?

Closing Prayer

All: Merciful God, you sent your Son to comfort those who mourn and bring all people into the peace of everlasting Life. Hear our prayers that we might be attentive to your

presence and live out our days to the fullest in praise of you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom
Every Wednesday
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

Meeting ID: 276 007 3734
Passcode: 1WordOfGod

All are welcome!

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References:

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
- (2) Gospel Reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sundays and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota
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