

With Power and Great Glory

Jesus – Whose Coming We Eagerly Await!

- **Vs. 27.** Pray: prepare us for that day! In name of Jesus:
- Today, Adv1, day ch begins new ch yr. Beautiful blue (color of hope); lit first candle on Adv wreath (candle of hope). Sanct windows, that walk us thru ch yr, take us back to far left, Adv window: see four candles, scroll of proph. Adv = coming. Today as begin Adv, prepare hearts for Christ's coming.
- And usually in Adv, our attention is on Christ's 1st coming, at Xmas. That's what's on minds this time yr. Xmas music on radio; maybe Xmas shopping; or put up Xmas decors weekend after ThG. In Dec/Adv, tend focus on Xmas, Christ's 1st coming. And when Jesus came 1st time, came in weakness, meekness, humility. Came as baby, born not in palace but in cattle stall; didn't even have a clean room for his birth; surrounded by animals, smells, messes; placed in animal feeding trough. Humility!
- But Adv prepares us for more than just humble birth; also, glorious return. Adv directs eyes/hearts heavenward, prepares us for Jesus' 2nd coming, at end of world, on Last Day, J-Day. And on that day, when Christ comes again: will not come as lowly little baby; he'll come with power and great glory (PGG). And today in Gospel, Jesus tells us what that day be like, at end world, when returns on Last Day, with PGG.

Language of Power and Great Glory

- As I read words of today's Gospel, I want you close eyes, picture this scene as Jesus describes end of world. **Vs. 25-26.** In Mt, Jesus adds, **"The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky"** (Mt 24:29). Language of cosmic distress, cataclysmic disaster – in heavens, on earth, on sea! When Christ comes again on Last Day with PGG, this world will crumble; fall apart, be destroyed by fire. **"The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare"** (2 Pt 3:10). No wonder Jesus: **vs. 26a.** Terrifying language: of cosmic distress, cataclysmic disaster.
- Also language of majesty: **vs. 27** – so when returns, riding clouds in majesty. Remember Asc, when went back into heaven: passed through clouds; angels said will come back in same way. Here: says he'll come back riding the clouds. Same vision Dan saw in Dan 7: **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven"** (7:13). Same vision John saw in Rev 1: **"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"** (1:7). And basis for familiar hymn, *"Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending."* On Last Day, when Jesus comes with PGG, he'll be riding clouds in majesty.
- Finally, day of Jesus' return is described with language of angels and trumpets – not so much in this gospel, but in Mt's: **"[The Son of Man] will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other"** (Mt 24:31). Imagine: blaring trumpet sound, myriad angels filling the sky (never seen before, now everywhere). And 2nd lesson ended: **"when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones"** (1 Thes 3:13) – angels. So Last Day, Christ will come with PGG to sound of trumpet and with sky full of angels.
- All this language re end of world – it's glorious, terrifying, majestic, frightening: there's cosmic distress in heavens, Jesus riding clouds, angels/trumpets. And it all paints picture of Christ coming back, not in meekness/humility (like baby in manger), but with PGG, as judge of living/dead. This is what J-Day will look like; and what Adv prepares us for: Jesus' 2nd coming at end of world.

Face the Last Day with Confidence

- So how these words make you feel – knowing this day is coming, someday (with own eyes) you will see all these events unfold? Jesus: **vs. 26a.** Maybe these words fill you with terror. And maybe they should! – bec when Jesus returns to judge sin, maybe you'll have lot sin to be judged. On Last Day,

how you going stand before Jesus, before his PGG, and say, "I'm ready for heaven," when you know you deserve hell for your sins, and when all signs around you (heavens shaking, earth burning) point to Christ as a judge who doesn't tolerate sin. How stand before him?

- Here's how: as believer in Jesus, you'll stand before him with confidence. Why? Bec vs. 28. J-Day is redemption day. Redemption and redeem = pay price to set someone free; release, deliver someone out of bondage. On cross Jesus redeemed you from sin; paid full price for your salvation, "not with gold/silver... suffering/death." When Jesus gave life on cross, he cancelled your guilt, covered your offenses forever; set you free from hell, delivered you from Satan.
- And yes, you still live in sinful world, where have sinful nature that clings to you; and yes, you still give into sinful temptations. But on J-Day, that changes forever. J-Day is redemption day, when Jesus comes with PGG to deliver you from all things sin-related (tempts, guilt, death, despair, suffering, pain). He's going to bring you to heaven, where you'll finally be free of it forever.
- So vs. 28. As Christians, we can face terrifying Day of Judgment without fear and stand before judge of heav/earth with confidence, because we know that that majestic cloud-riding judge: on our side, loves us! And when he does return with PGG, he will use his PGG to bring us to heaven forever.

Redemption Impacts How We Live

- And because that's true, that impacts the way we live lives. Vs. 34. Jesus will come suddenly, like thief in night; we don't know when he'll return. So: we have to be ready! Way to be ready: not "weighed down with...the anxieties of life." Lot of anxieties in life: shopping/spending, vacations/travelling, work/deadlines, job security, financial security, health scares, death in family, trouble with children, trouble with spouse. All these are the "anxieties of life" that can take our full attention, our sharp focus, off Jesus' 2nd coming. But we need to be ready. Vs. 35 – includes all us. So, vs. 36. Adv is re: prayer/prep to stand before Jesus. So we pray for strong faith; and prepare for his return by coming church, staying connected to means of grace (G in W/S).
- Adv teaches us how to live lives: with attentive readiness, prayerful preparation. And with hope. Adv is season of hope. Whenever you see blue at church, think re Jesus coming back, through clouds in blue sunny sky. We look forward to Jesus' return; wait for it with hope. Don't be scared of Last Day; but look forward to it and be ready for it – bec when Christ returns, with PGG, and you stand before Son of Man, that will be day of your redemption.

Luke 21:25-36

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time 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 up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

³² "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁴ "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."