

With Power and Great Glory

*At that time they will see the Son of Man coming
in a cloud with power and great glory.*

First Sunday in Advent



Jesus – Whose Coming We Eagerly Await!

- Today, Advent 1; church begins new church year. Blue (hopeful anticipation); Advent wreath prominent; lit first candle. Sanctuary windows, which walk us through church year, ask for attention again at far left, Advent window, with candles of hope and scroll of prophecy. Advent means coming. Today as we begin Advent, prepare hearts for coming of Christ.
- Normally think about in Advent as we prepare for Christ's coming? During Advent, don't we often focus on Christ's coming at Christmas? On mind, right? Made it past Thanksgiving; had fill of turkey & pie. Maybe Christmas shopping (Black Friday), songs on radio, decorations (our house). We tend to think of December, Advent as preparation only for Christmas, for Christ's first coming, as baby in Bethlehem, when came in meekness and humility, wrapped in human flesh, swaddling clothes, newborn baby's beauty.
- But season of Advent prepares us for more than manger. Advent is the season when we direct eyes heavenward, prepare hearts of 2nd coming of Christ, at end of world, on Last Day, when Christ will come again, not as baby, but with power and great glory. Candle: *"We remember Jesus, who will come at the end of time."* And today in Gospel (Lk 21) Jesus describes what it will be like at the end of time, when he will come with power and great glory (PGG)!

Language of Power and Great Glory

- I read; close eyes, envision in mind how Jesus describes Last Day. **Vs. 25-26.** Jump to Mt; Jesus adds, **"The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken"** (Mt 24:29). Language of cosmic distress, cataclysmic disaster – in heavens, on earth, on sea! On Last Day, when Christ comes 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 in it will be laid bare"** (2 Pt 3:10). No wonder, **vs. 26a.** Terrifying language, of cosmic distress, cataclysmic disaster.
- Also language of cloud-riding: **vs. 27** – somehow riding clouds. Remember Ascension: up into clouds. Here, come back riding the clouds. Same thing in Rev: **"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him"** (1:7). Basis for closing hymn, *"Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending."* On Last Day, when Christ comes with PGG, riding clouds as judge of living and dead.
- Finally, language of angels and trumpets! Don't see that so much in this lesson; **Mt 24:31**, **"[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."** Imagine; blaring trumpet sound, myriad of 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, Scriptures, descriptions of Last Day (cosmic distress, cloud-riding, angels, trumpets), all paint picture of Christ coming with PGG – not meekness and humility (like baby in manger) but strength and majesty. This is what Judgment Day will look like; what Advent prepares us for: 2nd coming. Terrible, terrifying day – Day of Judgment and end of world!

Face the Last Day with Confidence

- How make you feel, knowing this day is coming, you will someday see these all events unfold? Jesus said **vs. 26a**. Maybe fill with terror; maybe they should, because you know that on this day, when Christ comes to judge sin, you'll have a lot of sin to be judged. On Last Day how will you stand before Jesus, clothed in PGG, and say, "Ready for heaven," when you know you deserve hell, and when all signs around you point to Christ as judge who doesn't tolerate sin. How stand before him?
- How, as believer: with confidence, because **vs. 28**. Judgment Day is redemption day. Redemption and redeem = pay price to set free; release, deliver from bondage. On cross Jesus paid full price to redeem you from sin – when he shed blood, he cancelled guilt and covered offenses forever. But still live in sinful world; still have sinful nature that clings to you; still give into sinful temptations – sin surrounds you! But on Judgment Day, that changes forever. On Last Day, day of redemption, Christ will come with PGG not to condemn you but to deliver, redeem, set you free from sin forever.
- So **vs. 28**. We can face terrifying Day of Judgment without terror; stand before judge with confidence, because we know that on Last Day Jesus Christ will release us from struggles of life caused by sin and bring us to live with him in heaven when Satan can never tempt us, pain of sin never reach us, curse of sin never touch us! This is what it means that Christ will come with PGG on terrifying day that holds no terror for children of God, those redeemed by Christ. Day of redemption is day Christ uses PGG to bring us to heaven forever.

Redemption Impacts How We Live

- Because that's true, that impacts the way we live lives. **Vs. 34**. Heard unexpectedly before: 10 Virgins; Talents. Point: we don't know when Last Day will come; have to be ready! Way to be ready: not "**weighed down with...drunkenness.**" Many thing you can be drunk on (other than alcohol): shopping/spending; worry/depression; kids' sports teams; work; vacationing – whatever takes your attention, sharp focus off 2nd coming of Christ weighs you down with "drunkenness." Jesus wants us fully alert, sober minded, ready for coming. **Vs. 35** – includes us all; no one can escape Judgment Day. **Vs. 36**. What Advent is all about: prayer and preparation to stand before Jesus. In Advent we pray for strong faith in Jesus, so that on Last Day we can stand before him with confidence.
- That's how Advent teaches us to live lives: with sober readiness and prayerful preparation. And hope. Advent is season of hope, things unseen, yet to come. Whenever you see blue at church, think of hope. We hope for Christ's return; it's a good thing he's coming again! Goal of faith. Don't be scared of Last Day; look forward to it; be ready for it, because when Christ comes with PGG and you stand before Son of Man, that will be day of your redemption.

Luke 21:25-36 (NIV 1984)

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 Men 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 "I tell you the truth, 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 dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon 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."