

Homily for November 16, 2018

Today's Gospel brings into focus one of the most challenging of subjects, the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly in our passage he refers to the days of the Son of Man and associates his coming with judgment like that experienced in the time of Noah and Lot, from Genesis 8 and 19. The Second Coming of Jesus will be like in those days. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, and then judgment came. Then he moves from comparison with these two Old Testament stories to the situation that will be associated directly with His coming.

When that day comes the judgments of God will operate, and of two people, who all their lives lived side by side, one will be taken and the other left. There is a warning here. Intimacy with a good person does not necessarily guarantee our own salvation. 'No man can deliver his brother.' Is it not often true that a family is apt to leave the duties of church membership to one of its number? Is it not often true that a husband leaves the duties of the church to his wife? The judgment of God is an individual judgment. We cannot discharge our duty to God by proxy nor even by association. As Saint Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

***For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.*¹**

This is what Jesus is stating unequivocally here. Having heard about the final judgment the disciples ask: "Where Lord", to which Jesus gives this cryptic answer:

Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.²

Jesus replies with a phrase which sounds very much like a proverb and which, precisely because it is enigmatic, suggests that he does not want to give a clear answer to their question. The proverb indicates the speed with which birds of prey swoop down on their victims—apparently referring to the sudden, unexpected way the second coming or last judgment will happen. Holy Scripture also deals with this subject in other passages like this one from 1 Thessalonians:

"But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night"
(1 Thess 5:1–2).

Once more Jesus is exhorting us to be watchful: we should never neglect the most important thing in life—eternal salvation. "All that, which worries you for the moment, is of relative importance. What is of absolute importance is that we be saved"

So curious are the Pharisees and the disciples about the time and place of the last coming that they are distracted from Jesus' main point; the same thing happens to us: for example, we can spend a lot of time pondering the circumstances of the deaths of people we know, and fail to grasp the

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (2 Co 5:10). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Lk 17:37). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

warning these deaths contain—that this life is going to end one way or another and that after it we too will meet God.³

Therefore, we are to live in such a way that we not be deceived by those who either dismiss Jesus' coming or distort his teaching. In the words of 2nd John, a letter that is only 13 verse long, we are to abide in the teaching of Christ as we learn the way of his commandments. As we do this, we will abide in the Father and the Son and pray with the psalmist in the Psalter's longest psalm: 176 verses, these intentions that come from the Psalm opening:

*With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
¹¹ I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.⁴*

Treasuring Jesus' words, especially about the Second Coming will inspire us to live attentively in this world as we await the world that is coming.

³ [Saint Luke's Gospel](#). (2005). (pp. 151–152). Dublin; New York: Four Courts Press; Scepter Publishers.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Ps 119:10–11). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.