

ADVENT 1 – 2021
Jeremiah 33:14-16
Thess 3:12-4:2
Lk 21:25-28;34-36

I wish you all a Happy New Liturgical Year. On this day we begin our story again and look forward to the birth of Our Lord who came to earth to bear witness to the Truth.

Jeremiah also urged his people to remain faithful to God and look forward to the time when he would raise up the true offspring of King David. This new king would be a righteous branch of David's kingship and would reign with justice and in union with God.

We Christians believe that Jesus is that righteous branch and true offspring of king David. In today's gospel reading we read that at the end of all things, which Jews called the 'Day of the Lord,' the Son of Man will come in a cloud with power. The 'Son of Man' is a key word in St Luke's writings which he uses 80 times. No-one except the Father knows when the end will be but we believe that eventually all creation must be made obedient to God's will. If we don't believe that we are wasting our time trying to live the Christian life.

We also believe that God offers salvation to everyone and that we all face his judgement over how we have tried to embrace the values of his kingdom. Some of the kingdom's values are similar to what the Greek philosophers called the Cardinal Virtues. There are Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance. Jesus tells us to avoid being led astray by false teachers; to be cautious about preachers offering cheap salvation and grace and to be courageous and persevere to the end. Jesus also says that we must find and maintain balance in all things, not allowing ourselves to indulge in excesses which can lead to addictive behaviour.

Today's readings are not easy to hear and it is easy to see why people look to climate change, global pandemics and the sabotage of Western Culture as signs that the end is near. Our lack of control over these things leads to panic and even despair, but the good news is that humans have never been in absolute control. God is the One who is.

What God asks of us is to pay attention to what he is doing, what we are doing and what is going on around us. God is the one who always takes the initiative and is the one who creates order out of chaos.

We mustn't get stressed about all this so long as we remain faithful and trust him. He has made us his disciples his agents, so we must be guided by him. His grace will enable us to do what he asks of us. Discipleship is not a continuous walk in the park. Making his presence visible in the world is a risky exercise – ask Jesus and the countless saints who have been martyred or ostracised. Yet he calls us to be people of joy and hope because we are invited to put our trust in him rather than in ourselves. He is the only one we can genuinely rely on.

It is not God who excludes us from his promise of salvation, it is we who possess the ability to choose to exclude ourselves. No wonder Jesus tells us to pray, pray and pray. Prayer is the opposite of losing heart. St Paul tells the Thessalonians that prayer enables disciples to grow

in holiness. Our parish community must try to be loving, accepting and caring of each other within it, of those who seek to join us, and those in the world to whom we are asked to make God's love visible.

Times may be tough but the end is not yet – there is still work to be done. As the saying goes, “It ain't over until the fat lady sings,” so let's get on with our mission.

Msgr Harry Entwistle
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