

## ***FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT***

*Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36*

Today's scripture readings are about what is coming down the road towards us, they are about the promise God has made to us, the promise made when He said, "The days are coming, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David, and He will execute righteousness in the Land".

What does this promise of God mean to us now? What does it mean when Jesus says to us that there is a day coming when the Son of Man will

come to us in a cloud with power and great glory?

What do these promises mean now in the midst of a busy life, a hectic life, a life where our kids expect to be driven here and there, and ask for things that we just can't afford? A life where our employers expect us to work overtime, and our church, and our sport teams ask for hours we don't have?

What do these promises about the future mean when we are caught up in trying to do all we can do right here and now in the present, what do they mean when we are struggling to live one day at a time, when we are trying to be all things to all to many people?

What do they mean when we watch the news and discover that senseless horrors continue throughout the world; that crime and starvation and terrorism and war and earthquakes and floods

abound and indeed seen to be increasing?

Well, they mean that we should rejoice and that we should stand up and watch and pray; pray that we may be able to escape the time of tribulation, pray that we may be able to stand before The Son of Man when He comes.

The promise of God, the promise of Christ, is that the future is not

going to be like the present. It is that those things that we see that are

wrong in this world, those things that we hear of that are evil, will perish away, and that a new heaven and a new earth will come upon us, a heaven and earth of everlasting peace and justice, joy and love.

Jesus wants us to know that this is important. That is why He talks about the future, that is why He mentions the signs of this coming, how the stars and the moon and the sun itself will appear to go off course and terror will be felt among the nations, and fear among the peoples. And that is why He says: “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man”.

Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel reading not to be distracted by the big

issues: floods, famine, creation seeming to fall apart. But rather to see them as signs of what is to take place. But, He is also telling us about the personal things that can be more distracting, those personal events that are so dangerous, because they are

subtle and sneaky. We don't realize what is happening until it is too late. All of a sudden we're trapped, feeling sorry for ourselves, working so hard, being so focused on one thing, that we miss the bigger picture.

That's why Jesus tells us to be alert. To watch. To not get so caught up in the everyday things, or the big tragedies, that we lose sight of the

larger scheme, that we fail to see the presence of the Kingdom looming towards us with all its hope, all its promise.

The kingdom is coming. A righteous Branch has sprouted from David's line; and He will do what is just and right in the land.

He has come, and He is returning. We are called to be ready for Him when He does, to be praying and loving and doing the things He has commanded us to do.

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That is the attitude of Advent. Of being alert to what is going on around us. Of understanding what the signs around us are trying to tell us

and getting ourselves prepared for the fulfilment of God's word in our midst. Of preparing ourselves by prayer. Of readying ourselves by having in us the holy hope that God wants us to have.

Jesus does not tell us about the signs of the end and the coming time of judgement to frighten us, but rather to assure us, to have us understand

that God is keeping His promise, and that the time of His rule is

at hand. He tells us about the signs of the coming of the kingdom so that we might ready ourselves for it.

Just look around and, with our head held up high, walk the road towards the approaching Kingdom in prayer and in hope, in righteousness and in love, knowing that as so many of the promises of God were fulfilled at the birth of Christ, so too the rest will be fulfilled, to His praise and His glory.

**AMEN.**