

Luke 21:25-36

Populus Zion: 2nd Sunday in Advent

4 December 2016

St. John's, Chicago, IL

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Spoiler alert!" Among movie buffs, this phrase informs you that details are about to be disclosed that you would not yet know if you haven't seen the film or read the book. If you want to experience the film with its full sense of wonder and surprise, you should avoid the magazine or newspaper article with spoilers, or the film clip from a trailer that says too much, or talking about it with your impatient friend that digs through the internet, finding everything he can to learn about the movie ahead of time.

Spoiler alert! In today's Gospel, Jesus gives details to take away some of the shock and surprise of the Last Day. Although **here**, He does that for our **benefit**, to alleviate fear.

"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves," prophesies Jesus. But the thing is, it seems every era has its eclipses, its meteorites, and on earth, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, and terrifying tornadoes.

Jesus is describing the end, here, and He speaks of these terrible events as signs of the end. Terrible events that have happened all along, since the Fall of Adam and Eve, but which we now experience more strongly. And at the right moment, He will descend from the sky, even as the disciples saw Him go up.

Everyone enjoys the annual anticipation of Baby Jesus, but far too often, we set aside and forget another theme for Advent: Christ's return at the Last Day. The "Second Coming."

Spoiler alert! You can be certain that the Lord Himself will come out of the sky and return for you. Christ Jesus, God-in-the-flesh, is that Son of Man who is coming. He is the Advent King. He transcends the cosmos and comes in glory, rescuing you from the self-destructing world by preparing a place for you to live, body and soul, with Him!

Here is the situation, though. You remember that our Lord declares that "***no one knows the hour,***" of that Last Day. Even God the Son has chosen not to know. Only the Father. So you know not to listen to crack pots who claim to know the end of time. You know that such doomsday books and movies are completely fiction. You know that the "*Left Behind*" books or even the novels of Dan Brown are full of false teaching and poorly

researched history. They get mixed up on Christ's simple, straightforward message about the end.

However, you have other problems. You do not **really** believe that He is coming, at least **not soon** and in the flesh. You have been lulled into thinking that the return of Christ is something far, far off. Jesus says, "**soon**," but you think you know better. You doubt Him and disbelieve His promise that He will be back "***in a little while.***"

And then there is the problem that you don't **want** Christ to come. You pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," and sing, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," but how true are those words? For most, while inviting the Lord to come now, in the backs of your minds you are thinking, "But not yet! I haven't graduated, and I'm not even married yet!" "Sure, Lord, come! But not too quickly, I am too young." In your stubborn, fallen nature, you are rejecting the Lord, and telling Him to keep His distance. Keeping God at a safe arm's breadth, or so you think, you are defying Him.

Stop. Repent. Rejoice.

The Lord God sent Saint John the Baptizer to come and fill the Office of Elijah, preparing the way for the Root of Jesse, the Sun of Righteousness, God the Son, who will reign forever. The One who is both the Creator of Jesse and his descendant is the Advent King who sits on the throne of His father David forever.

He does that, not simply because He enjoys being Sovereign. He does it for you! Reigning from the throne of His holy cross, He extends the forgiveness, life, and salvation won there to you, from the throne of His altar!

So what does all this mean for you, here, now? There is a apocryphal story that I have repeated about Martin Luther that always makes its rounds, but recently pastor have pointed out that no one is able to locate it in his writings, and verify that he actually said it. Supposedly, Luther was once asked what he would do, if he knew for certain that the Lord would return the very next day. Since the Luther's had a garden, and he must have had a "to do" list, he replied that he would plant his apple tree. What he is saying is that God wants you to continue your life.

You don't need to be like the Thessalonians, who were stopping everything, and just waiting for Jesus to return. "Keep calm and carry on," assured that the Son of Man is your loving Savior, who has rescued you, and comes in love to bring you home, resurrected body and soul, forever.

In the end you can do nothing. But that is a blessing. Jesus your Redeemer has purchased and won you from sin, death, and hell.

Now --**spoiler alert!**-- you simply go on in your life of faith, until He gathers you up as His glorious Bride, the Church, and brings you eternal joys and blessings in Him! So now, it is **not** a **command**, but a **joyful description** of your life as He says, ***"Straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*** Amen.