

## **November 14, 2021**

Dan 12:1-3; Heb 10:11-14; Mk 13:24-32

Some people have come to me lately asking if it seemed that we were coming to the end of the world. When we see things like the recent pandemic it may make us think; when we hear of world governments in disarray (including our own) it may make us concerned. The end of the world has been predicted over and over again - a real recent one was October 2015, someone else says it will be by the end of this year - hold on to your hats! Jesus today encourages us to not try to calculate the day - but rather to focus ahead while living in Him in the current day.

Things seems to us to be really bad when we only look a few years back and think that everything is only going to follow the most dismal path. But try to live in a place during war time. Some of the older here know the horrible realities of war and the deprivations and world disruption that occur. The world continues despite two world wars, times of worldwide famine, time of vast corruption and killing, tremendous diseases and climactic events that killed tens of thousands - all of these have been part of human history since the beginning of recorded time. Jesus reminds us today that the end of the world will come at some time as, yet he also says: *But of that day or hour, no one knows*. So let's not get too worried trying to predict what is unpredictable - but be awake and ready for what is available to us today.

When Jesus speaks of *[days of] tribulation [where] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken* He is referring to many things at the same time. He is speaking about the end of the world for sure. But he is also speaking about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews saw the Temple as the center of the universe with tapestries of stars and candles that represented the planets. It's destruction in 70 AD was symbolically referenced in these images Jesus uses. He is also speaking of His own death when the sky was darkened by an eclipse and there was an earthquake, and His followers were in great tribulation. We also could apply it to the times in our own life when it seems like the sky is falling, where we do not see any light, where it seems like all is coming to an end - when we wonder if even the powers of heaven have been shaken. Jesus knows that before the end of the world, our own personal worlds may be rattled and we may feel that, it is *a time unsurpassed in distress*, as we heard in the first reading.

The message today is clear: Don't worry before it happens. Don't worry about figuring out the end of the world - you can't do anything about it and can't know when it will happen anyway. Don't worry excessively about possible bad things in life that haven't happened yet - you won't always be able to predict them or prevent them. Jesus, instead calls us to look at the fig tree. In Palestine most trees are evergreens, but the fig tree goes through the cycles of losing its leaves in the Fall and then sprouting new ones in the Spring. In a climate that doesn't change much all year, it is a sign to everyone that the summer is coming and it will be time to harvest. Jesus says to look more for the times of growth, the times of new beginnings (like the sprouting of the new leaves), to look forward to a future harvest rather than looking for the end of good things. If we paid more attention to the signs of good things that can come, and less to the bad things that might be on the horizon - maybe we would be less stressed out in general.

More and more I am convinced that the closer we get to the Lord, the less that the inevitable tribulations of life can harm us. Of bad times Daniel says: *At that time there shall arise Michael, the ... guardian of your people; ... At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book.* Jesus promises that those who join to Him *will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect ... from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.* Focusing on following Jesus in the present, uniting and reuniting with His Body sacramentally, striving to be among the elect, placing emphasis on growth and bringing in a good harvest - all of this will bring a greater peace in life. I have found this personally as I work to live the spiritual life He has taught us, as I place more and more trust in Him amid struggles, as I surrender my will to His - I am the most secure and content as I have ever been. Also I have more confidence that at the end of my world, I can be found among the elect that the angels will gather to Jesus in the next life. This is a lot better than stressing about future tragedies I can't control - better to look for signs of growth, and the possibilities of good things to come.