

*Last Sunday after Pentecost- EF 2014*  
*Matthew 24: 13-25*  
*Dcn. Pat Hall*

Do you hear the alarm?

Our Gospel presents a picture of the future in apocalyptic proportions.

Scott Hahn defines apocalyptic literature as prophecy about the end of world history, when the powers of evil launch their terminal struggle against God, only to be defeated in a terrible struggle. The apocalypse gives assurance to those who already experience persecution of a future hope in the light of God's proven fidelity in the past. God will triumph in the future, just as he has triumphed throughout human history. God's divine plan will prevail. The righteous will reign victorious with God. <sup>i</sup>

Jesus says his prophecy of the end times is rooted in the dream had by Daniel the Prophet. Daniel's vision can be found in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Daniel.

It would be good to read Daniel 7. It speaks of great devouring beasts, surging streams of fire and great terror. The dream ends with the victory of the holy people of the Most High.

Those who heard Jesus' own prophecy of the Apocalypse, knew well of the terrors of Daniel's dream and knew exactly of what Jesus was speaking.

The prophecy of a future time of tribulation was a tradition hundreds of years old before the time of Jesus' ministry. Jesus preached that that time was now immanent.

There was no spare time left. If one had risen to the heights of a roof top, there was no time to descend to the lower levels. If one was in the fields, there was no time to go back for a coat. The time is now!

So how are we to respond to the immanency preached 2000 years ago?

There are many today who see signs of the end times. They include images of people holding signs on busy street corners proclaiming the end is near, while bustling people rush past. They include novels and movies like the "Left Behind" series co-authored by Kalamazoo's own Jerry Jenkins. Our news is full of war, genocide, tsunamis, earthquakes and other disasters.

And yet our world continues to chug along with the same rhythm as if all will continue as it has.

We Christians were raised to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ. We were given parables such as the maidens who had no oil for their lamps at the wedding. (Mt 25: 1) And we were told to be prepared, as the day of the Lord would come like a “thief in the night.” (1 Thes 5:2)

And yet, we have been waiting for “any time now” for 2000 years. How do we live with a sense of expectancy over such a long delay, at least as reckoned in human terms of time?

I would like to start with the opposite. What would life be like if we had no expectation, no hope for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God? If I were to really contemplate that as a possibility, I don't know if I could recover from the loss of meaning. It would leave me in desolation. Could I be nothing more than an organism destined to the nothingness of dust? That possibility would be more distressing to me than any trembling I might experience on account of the impending tribulation.

You see, despite the alarms about the terrors of the Tribulation, we are promised mercy, hope and victory. It is the enemy of the Kingdom of the Most High who should be trembling about the Second Coming of Christ.

We, who have opened our hearts to God's grace, have no need to fear. Jesus is our hope. Our Catechism says, “When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace.” (CCC 682)

What does acceptance of grace look like? If we were to accept the love of the Father, we would look like loving children. If we were to become disciples of the Son, we would look like the Son. If we were to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, the great *Anima*, we would look like we were animated by the Holy Spirit of God.

That can be seen in how we praise and worship. That can be seen in how we take care of each other, our families and our neighbors. To refuse to love each other is to refuse God's grace and divine love. This is the scandal of obstructing God's grace to others and has eternal consequences.

How do I experience the immanency of Christ's coming?

Death is all around us. We see the end of earthly time all about us. There is no guarantee that I will survive the car ride home after Mass. I put on my seat belt, drive right of center and stop at the red lights. But in the end, my survival is not in my own hands. If I reflect now and then on such, may it not inspire some sense of immediacy that I need to prepare to meet my maker? If I realize that I might not be here tomorrow to love my wife, might I not love her all the more intensely today? If

I were not able to spend any more time with you, might I be more patient and generous? And maybe I might try to be a little less annoying to you.

If I acted with that kind of immanency, might I actually become a better brother and deacon for you?

Let us embrace than sense of the impending. It is now. Let us become who we were designed to be, to become what we were made for.

We were made for love, by Love, to love.

Our hearts were created to yearn for God, to yearn to receive his love and to yearn to share his love.

Today is the Last Sunday after Pentecost. We have been led up to edge of Advent.

Advent: the “time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus,”<sup>ii</sup> when we cry out with the angels at Bethlehem, “For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. (Lk 2:11)

Advent: when we cry out as the blind begger did, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Lk 18:38)

Advent: when we cry out the last words recorded in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20)

May the hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen us in our tribulations and make us one in love.

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<sup>i</sup> Scott Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, definition of Apocalyptic Literature

<sup>ii</sup> *Wikipedia*, definition of Advent