

## Locum's Line-Outs - Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November – First Sunday in Advent Luke 21: 25-36

### *Apocalypse*

*This week's Gospel is an example of apocalyptic writing – that is a text that gives a vision of things that are inevitably and inescapably coming. The word literally means the lifting of the veil, opening the curtain – revealing events that cannot be avoided or diverted.*

*The visions call people (us) to face our deepest fears,  
the shadows of the things we depend on, the questions of existence and annihilation.  
We cannot approach Truth, the Real at the heart of reality unless and until we do this.  
They call us to personal repentance and transformed living.  
Our transformed living is witness to the God who has saved us.*



Each year, the lectionary for the first Sunday of Advent gives us a version of Jesus' words about the end of days. This year Luke does the honours. In Luke 21.25-36, we read of celestial signs, cataclysms of nature, and distress upon the earth. Jesus speaks of fear and foreboding that will come upon the people. He warns that in the days to come the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

It seems a sobering and grim way to welcome us into a season that in the Christian tradition is a time of expectation and celebration and in the wider culture of extravagant festivities.

Yet in greeting us as we cross the threshold into Advent, this apocalypse-in-miniature reminds us that this season bids us not only to remember and celebrate the Christ who has already come to us, but also to anticipate and look toward the fullness of time when he will bring about the redemption of the world.



So, these dark words assure us that the healing of the world is at hand, so we need to stay awake, stay alert, and learn to read the signs of what is ahead. Jesus calls us not to crumble or quail when intimations of the end come but instead to “stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Jesus urges his hearers—now and then - toward practices that help us stay grounded and centered in our own lives so that we won't be caught unawares in the days to come.



*Bernard of Clairvaux, the twelfth-century abbot and theologian, wrote eloquently of “three Advents”:*

- 1. Firstly of the Incarnation, the Advent at Christmas; and*
- 2. second or “middle” Advent, says Bernard, the one in between these other two, is the everyday arrival of Jesus: the knock at the door, the still small voice, the lonely prisoner, the hungry mother, the weary refugee, the migrant worker, the asylum seeker.*
- 3. last of all, the Parousia, the Advent at the end of the age (Luke's subject in this week's passage), and the*

In other words, Jesus is coming again and again, like a thousand spring buds on a fig tree long thought dead. So be alert — lamps lit and dressed for action.

Remember - hope is a verb!



"REMEMBERING THAT IT HAPPENED ONCE,"  
Wendell Berry

Remembering that it happened once,  
 We cannot turn away the thought,  
 As we go out, cold, to our barns  
 Toward the long night's end, that we  
 Ourselves are living in the world  
 It happened in when it first happened,  
 That we ourselves, opening a stall  
 (A latch thrown open countless times  
 Before), might find them breathing there,  
 Foreknown: the Child bedded in straw,  
 The mother kneeling over Him,  
 The husband standing in belief  
 He scarcely can believe, in light  
 That lights them from no source we see,  
 An April morning's light, the air  
 Around them joyful as a choir.  
 We stand with one hand on the door,  
 Looking into another world  
 That is this world, the pale daylight  
 Coming just as before, our chores  
 To do, the cattle all awake,  
 Our own white frozen breath hanging  
 In front of us; and we are here  
 As we have never been before,  
 Sighted as not before, our place  
 Holy, although we knew it not.

Wendell Berry



**Collect:** Eternal God, through long generations you prepared a way for the coming of your Son, and by your spirit you still bring light to illumine our paths: renew us in faith and hope that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love; to whom be glory for ever. **Amen.**

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