

**November 28, 2021**  
**1st Sunday of Advent**  
**Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens

will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

### **Background**

The gospels of Matthew (24:3-44), Mark (13:3-37) and Luke (21:7-36) each contain a narrative where the disciples marvel at the beauty of the Temple of Jerusalem and Jesus predicts its destruction. The disciples then inquire when this event will happen. Jesus responds by telling them that before this takes place, they will experience catastrophic events within creation, and human disasters, and they will undergo persecutions and some deaths. This description of future events in each of the synoptic gospels is known as a "little apocalypse." Two weeks ago, on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, the gospel was a portion of Mark's "little apocalypse." Today's gospel is part of part of Luke's "little apocalypse."

Scripture scholars generally agree that Luke drew upon Mark's gospel. However, while Mark wrote before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Luke wrote approximately 15 years after the Romans razed it. Luke tries to separate what has already happened from what is yet to come. The fall of the temple was emotionally disheartening for the Jews. Luke thus points to a much more vital event yet to come, which will be signaled by cosmic disturbances. These signs will signal the coming of Christ as Judge of the World.

The modern reader might hear the warning against giving in to carousing and the anxieties of daily life, and presume that Luke is addressing a social situation not very different from our own. However, Luke's Christian community was a small splinter group of the larger Jewish community. In addition, most of the people of the day lived in dire poverty, wondering if they would have enough to make it through to the next day. They did not have the wealth to be concerned about getting drunk or be preoccupied with worldly possessions. When Luke addresses those who might be tempted to give in to drunkenness and the anxiety of the day, he is speaking to a very select group of people who are not only wealthy but also greedy. They are those who refuse to share the resources with those in need. In Luke's day these people lived without honor. Luke is reminding his community that



when Jesus returns, the whole of creation will be changed, and each person will stand before the Son of Man as an equal. There will be no privileged!

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you encountered people who see, in the events of the present day, signs of God's final coming? How do you respond?
2. What do you most remember about these days between Thanksgiving and Christmas when you were young? How has that changed?
3. What would you like to be your focus this year? What are some things that you need to do to make that happen?
4. Luke tells the community of Christians that they should stand erect and raise their heads at the coming of Jesus. When have you prayed standing erect with your head raised?
5. From the perspective of the Jews, God seemed to delay sending the Messiah, and to the Christians, God seems to have delayed the return of Jesus. What are some things within your awareness that God seems to have delayed bringing into completion in this age?
6. How might you approach this season of Advent in a way that might open you to grace that is found in waiting?
7. Can you talk with God now about how you feel about God's delay, or your waiting? Speak honestly to God, who wants to know your often-unspoken feelings and thoughts.

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM.  
They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel.  
<https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>

