



Gospel Reading: Mark 13: 33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Gospel Meditation

What do you do when someone you love very dearly and miss very much has been gone a very long time but promises to return soon? Do you ignore their absence, or do you anticipate their return and send them messages to let them know how much you long to be with them again? Jesus' parable about the long-expected return of the Master to his household brings this point home.

Parable of the watchful servants waiting for the master's return

Wealthy landowners often left their estates in the hands of their trustworthy servants and stewards. This gave them freedom to travel, trade, and expand their business ventures. They expected loyalty and hard work from their servants and rewarded them accordingly. Dutiful servants would eagerly anticipate their master's return by keeping the house and estate in good order. Jesus doesn't tell us in his parable whether the servants were ready to receive the unexpected return of their master. Were these servants excited or anxious about their master's return? The watchful servants, no doubt, looked forward to the future because they knew their master would be pleased and would reward them for their vigilance and hard work. Disaster and reprisal, however, awaited those who were unprepared because of carelessness or laziness.

Watching with hopeful expectation and vigilance for Christ's return

When we expect some very important event to happen, we often wait for it with excited anticipation. The Lord Jesus expects us to watch in great anticipation for the most important event of all - his return in glory at the end of this present age! The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Lord when *he shall judge between the nations and decide for many peoples* (Isaiah 2:5).

The Advent season reminds us that we are living in the end times. The end times begin with the first coming of Christ (when *the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us* - John 1:14) and it culminates in Christ's second coming on the Day of Judgment and vindication for his people. Jesus spoke of his return in glory at the close of the ages as an indisputable fact and predetermined act which he will perform as the Judge and Ruler of all peoples, nations, and individuals who ever lived on the earth.

"May your kingdom come!"

While the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is for certain, the time of his appearance is not yet disclosed. The Lord's day of visitation and judgment will come swiftly and unexpectedly. Jesus warns his listeners to not be caught off guard when that day arrives. It will surely come in God's good time! The Lord invites us to pray for the coming of his kingdom into our present lives and future as well. Jesus taught his disciples to pray - "may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Do you earnestly pray for the coming of God's kingdom - both now and at the end of the world?

The Lord will reward those who wait for him

The prophet Isaiah tells us that God will surely reward those who wait for his visitation: "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4). Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, has entrusted us with his gifts and graces (his abundant favors and blessings). He expects us to make good use of the gifts and resources he gives us for his glory and for the benefit of helping and blessing others as well. He does not want us to use the present time we have here on earth in idleness or wasted living. He has work for us to do - loving, honoring, and serving him and loving, honoring, and serving our families, neighbors, and communities as well.

How do we watch and wait for the Lord's coming?

How does the Lord want us to be watchful and vigilant for his return? The kind of watching the Lord has in mind is not a passive "wait and see what happens" approach to life. The Lord urges us to vigilance and to active prayer that his "kingdom may come" and his "will be done on earth as it is in heaven". We are not only to watch *for* Christ, but to watch *with* Christ. The Lord wants us to have our hearts and minds fixed on him and his word. He wants us to be ready for his action and work of grace in our lives and in our world. Those who "wait" for the Lord will

not be disappointed. He will surely come with his grace and saving help. Do you watch for the Lord's action in your life with expectant faith and with joyful hope?

The season of Advent is a time for rousing our minds and hearts for the Lord's coming. As his servants we watch for his will - continually seeking him. We watch for his word and his power - that he may act now to save and to deliver. And we watch for his visitation - he will surely come again! Servants of the Lord rouse yourselves! Be vigilant, be alert, be "watchmen" for the Lord pointing the way for his coming. www.dailyscripture.net Copyright © 2012-2023 Don Schwager

Reflection Questions

For Reading 1:

Q: When did you experience "bad times?" How did God give you hope?

For the Responsorial Psalm:

Q: How have you prayed in times of desperation? What were the results of those prayers?

Q: How can times like Advent restore your spirit?

For Reading 2:

Q: How has God's grace changed you? How has the deep faith of others helped your faith?

For the Gospel:

Q: What is the greatest hope in life? Why don't many people realize their hopes and dreams?

Q: What is your greatest hope for the holidays? How does your hope match God's? Explain..



Share the Word Sunday Reflection

For December 3, 2023

1st Sunday of Advent



"Be watchful! Be alert!"

First Reading: Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b, 64: 2-7

"You, Lord, are our Father."

Responsorial Psalm: 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

R: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

He will keep you firm to the end.

Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

"You do not know when the time will come."

"Lord Jesus, awaken my heart and mind to receive your word and to prepare for your coming again. Free me from complacency, from the grip of sin and worldliness, and from attachments to things which pass away. May I always be eager to receive your word and be ready to meet you when you come again."

Question of the Week: *For what are you watching?*