

SSC REFLECTION: 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B. Mk 13:24-32. Fr Donal McIlraith

Sunday Text. Mk 13:24-32.

[24]"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

[25] and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

[26] And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

[27] And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

[28]"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

[29] So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

[30] Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.

[31] Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

[32]"But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Comments

1. All three Synoptic Gospels contain this so-called eschatological discourse. *Eschatos* is a Greek word that means the furthest away, the end, and so this is Jesus' sermon about the end of the world. Basically, he speaks of three things, (i) the end of Jerusalem, (ii) the end of the world and (iii) his own coming as Son of Man. In the Jewish mentality at that time, the end of Jerusalem would mean the end of the world. Jesus implies that these two events will be widely separated. We know that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. Jesus warns us not to be deceived during this time as many false "Messiahs" will come. In this week's gospel, the Church puts the section with the second coming of Jesus before us.

2. Creation in its present condition will come to an end when Jesus comes. There will be a new creation. When Jesus comes, he will gather his elect from everywhere. We know that God made everything and so only he can bring everything to an end. Gen 1:16 tells us he made the sun, moon and stars. These summarize everything else. When these pass away then everything is at an end. Jesus does remind us, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." The Apocalypse tells us that when the first world passes, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. This word is not the end of God's project. The risen Jesus will show forth the power of God.
3. Clouds, power, glory, angels, these are closely associated with God. When the Son of Man comes with these, it indicates his divine status. The divinity of Jesus will be revealed to "all" at this time. The angels will then gather the elect. These will share the glory of Jesus. Who are the elect? Back in Mk 8:38 Jesus had explained who the elect were. There he said: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." If we stay in communion with Jesus now, when he comes in glory, we will be in communion with him. If we reject this communion with Jesus now, this rejection will continue when he comes in glory. We won't be forced into communion then. We confirm ourselves as the elect or otherwise by our acceptance or rejection of Jesus, who manifests the divine love for us all. From his place of power in the resurrection, Jesus will then establish the new creation.
4. The parable of the fig tree shows us that there is a future, more than the present. When you see the leaves sprouting, you know that there is a future: the summer. The Father establishes all. He alone knows the future. It is foolish to try and work out

dates. Instead, we should have absolute trust in Him and in his love for us.

For your interest:

God willing, I will try and put my Apocalypse course at PRS on Zoom first term next year and make it available to everyone. This is really the story of the resurrection and how Jesus make us the new creation – is we want it? Watch this space!