

Advent

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Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he will come again in glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal.

Our text may be found in today's gospel from St Mark chapter 13, verse 26:

'The Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.'

Last week, Christ the King and the end of the Christian Year. Today, Advent Sunday and the beginning of a new Christian Year. Well, if last week we looked forward to a vision of the perfection of Christ as not only our friend, our brother and our Saviour but also as our Lord and King, so this week, as we start the season of Advent, a time like Lent of spiritual discipline when we prepare not for the crucifixion and resurrection but for the incarnation. And Advent is a time for us to look forward not only to Christmas but also to the Second Coming.

I must admit I don't tend to dwell on the end times. If you were to look through my 1500 odd sermons, then you'd find few written on the Second Coming. Why? I guess because no one knows when things are going to come to an end. In today's passage from Mark, we hear of the parable of the man going off on a journey and leaving his servants in charge of his house, charging the door keeper in particular with instructions to be on watch for they don't know when their master will be coming back home: in the evening; after midnight; at cockcrow; or at dawn. Or if you prefer, on the same theme, what about the great image of the thief in the night that you'll find in Matthew (24 v43) and Luke's (12v6) gospels?

So though we don't know, can't know for certain when the end is going to come, we are urged to be awake, like a good boy scout we should be prepared. So though we can smile when Jehovah Witnesses bang on about Armageddon and the end times, they do have a point – that one day the world we know and love will come to an end.

And it may be sooner than we think. Climate change is certainly a reality unless you think like Donald Trump 'thinks' – that it is just 'fake news', dreamt up by dodgy scientists and the climate change lobby to scare us into cleaning up our act and stop burning coal. Certainly, there are wars and the rumours of wars – war in Syria, Yemen, Iraq; North Korea testing nuclear bombs and launching guided missiles. Certainly, there are earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and strange weather events like the seriously strong winds of late. But however uneasy I am, we are, about social unrest, social divisions, accidents, disasters and the threats of

terrorism, we can't know that the age in which we live are the end times but we should, nevertheless, be prepared get our act together and our lives in order.

After all, we don't want to be caught napping the day or night that we are called to give an account of ourselves, our lives and actions. God-willing, we will be prepared ! But what do you think ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

3rd December 2017

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