

## Advent 1, 29/11/2015, Holy Trinity

## Luke 21:25-36

Another Church year has finished and we come to the first Sunday of Advent.

This is supposed to be time of preparation for Christmas when we commemorate the coming of our Lord and yet to-day's Gospel is pre-occupied with the "Last Days" and the "Second Coming of Jesus".

This means that even though Jesus has come we need to be aware of, and, be on our guard against, the perils of life in this world.

In other words, be on our guard, be alert, while we are an Advent people, a waiting people.

We live in a world full of surprises and many of them are not pleasant.

There are wars and rumours of wars, distress among nations, there are awful examples of brutality of one human being against another or many others, there are earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and droughts, fires with loss of life and property and changes in climate, as well as many good and beautiful things that happen.

In the midst of all of this we are a "waiting people" and let's face it, we are not very good at waiting, just think of yourself in the queue at the checkout at the supermarket.

In the early Church, they thought that Jesus would return very soon so many gave up working, relying on others to provide them with the necessities of life and when Jesus didn't return, some became tired of waiting, got bored and started to lose their faith in Jesus.

In to-day's world we tend to do the opposite.

We continue to work and in many cases, to work "like mad", to pay off the mortgage, to live in the style to which we have become accustomed, to help with the grandchildren.

We wonder and question what kind of a world they will live in and all the time we are aware of terrorist bombs in different parts of the world and 'lone wolf' terrorists in our country.

We try to learn to live with the changing patterns of nature.

Remembering that we are still in this waiting mode and Luke's Gospel reading tries to keep up our flagging spirits.

The Son of Man is coming with power and great glory.

Even in the midst of the confusion and chaos, Jesus reassures us "The Kingdom of God is near".

We acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult to discern the Presence of the Kingdom or even the presence of God.

Rather than go into the little world of ourselves, our family and of a few like-minded persons Jesus commands, "Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is near", or because your liberation is near.

It is saying something like, stay awake, continue to pray at all times for the strength to survive all that is going on and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.

This means that from time to time our faith will be challenged, put to the test.

We live in a precarious world and we are not immune to the downs of our own lives, times when things go horribly wrong.

These are times when we remember that Jesus told us, "In the world you will have trouble. But be brave, I have conquered the world."

He is the light when darkness covers our world.

When the going gets tough, we need to see the signs and remember the promises of God who will never let us down.

It is as we do these things that we will be able to go on.

Advent, then, is not only a season of waiting with God and on God when we are told to "be on your guard" and "be alert".

Advent is also a season of hope that, in God's scheme of things, the darkness of the world around us will not get darker and colder forever.

The fig tree in to-day's Gospel will again blossom and bloom for summer is just a day or two away.

The summer of our spiritual life is at hand and our liberation is drawing near.

There is so much to do in this season of hope and of waiting, remembering that Christ's word and promise to his people will not pass away, because God is with us ALWAYS.