



Dec. 3, 2017 Mk. 13: 24-32- 33-37 & Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Pure Light of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The End of the World](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[Before I die video TED talk](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

We come to the end of this liturgical year with two opposing emotions. One of distress; something has to be changed because of all the problems we face; the other of hope; hope that we have learned from our experiences and can do better this time. Jesus was living in times such as ours. The ordinary person lived with such oppressive conditions that life was hardly worth living. There existed in a small group of people who trusted that God was with them and they needed to be ready to move with any opening God created, and we call them the disciples and apostles. In and through their response to Jesus' call, we now follow in their steps as we take our turn in responding to what God is inviting us into today. Now, WATCH and be awake.

Mk. 13:24-37

24 But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the

heavenly bodies will be shaken.' 26 At that time men will see the **Son of Man** coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his **angels** and gather his elect from the **four winds**, from the ends of the **earth** to the ends of the **heavens**. 28 Now learn this lesson from the **fig tree**: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves **come out**, you know that **summer is near**. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is **near**, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this **generation** will certainly not **pass away** until all these things have happened. 31 **Heaven and earth** will **pass away**, but my **words** will never pass away. 32 No one **knows** about that **day or hour**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the **Father**.

33 Be on **guard!** Be **alert!** You do not **know** when that time will come. 34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his **house** and puts his **servants** in charge, each with his **assigned** task, and tells the one at the door to keep **watch**. 35 Therefore keep **watch** because you do not **know** when the owner of the **house** will come back--whether in the **evening**, or at **midnight**, or when the **rooster crows**, or at **dawn**. 36 If he comes **suddenly** do not let him find you **sleeping**. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: **'Watch!'**

DISCUSSION QUESTION: At the end of each liturgical year we are invited to watch. Watch to see what openings God is creating for us to grow in faith. What helps you to watch and stay awake?

PRAYER: Watch! Stay awake! Don't be afraid! Expect God! Just when you think all is lost, all will be saved! This is the message of the final weeks of this liturgical year. It is hard to hope in times of distress, but it is also a time when people are most open to the new breaking into the world. Lord, help me to trust that by staying alert to what you are doing, I can be ready to open the door of my heart to your coming. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

DISTRESS: Periods of distress often reveal what we are made of. We look back on them as times we hope never to have to live through again, but would not want to miss the growth they evoked.

Do you think the disciples could appreciate what Jesus was saying to them? What might have gotten in the way of their hearing? What gets in your way in stressful times that blocks your hearing?

SUN: In Jesus' day many people worshipped the sun. An eclipse was an event that struck terror in the hearts of the uninformed. When the days shortened in the winter months, it was a great relief to see them begin to lengthen again. The disciples, being forewarned, would not panic when the predicted event came about.

Now the sun becomes a reality that moves from being a god, to a sign of the power of God. Even in today's awareness an eclipse creates awe. If you had been one of the disciples, what comfort would Jesus' predictions have given you? Would it enable you to 'hang in there' better?

DARKENED: To be dark is to have no light to see. In these days where we seldom experience total darkness, it is hard to imagine the terror that would ensue as darkness covered the earth. By being forewarned, the disciples had a 'light' or 'insight' not available to others. See Is. 13:10; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10,31:3:15 and Haggai 2:6,21.

Have you ever been able to endure a trial much better because you had been forewarned? Did the 'light' of that information give you an 'insight' into what was going on?

MOON: The moon was a great gift to people. Without it, a person would have no way to reckon time. Those who studied the moons phases and cycles had great power in their cultures.

Without sun or moon there would be no day or night. There could be no life. There would be total disorientation. Try to imagine the chaos that this condition would generate.

STARS: The stars also functioned as sources of information. Their places in the sky steered ships and marked the passing seasons. It was thought that each person's birth added another star in the sky, and its position influenced your life.

Imagine the terror in seeing your star falling out of the skies along with all the other stars. What would that mean to you?

HEAVENLY BODIES / ANGELS: There is no consensus about the meaning of any of these realities. It seems to mean the army of cosmic forces or messengers of God.

If even these realities are shaken, what chance does a mere mortal have in a situation like this? How would you express such a condition today?

SHAKEN: To shake is to move rapidly back and forth or up and down. That which is not flexible often crumbles when shaken.

Would this advance information enable the disciples to avoid crumbling when the shaking happens? What in your faith life is vulnerable to being shaken these days?

SON OF MAN: Jesus totally identifies with our humanity, and chose to accept our human condition so he could really be with us.

Given the fact that the disciples were trying to prepare themselves for losing Jesus, would his coming as the Son of Man be a source of reassurance and comfort for them? What does this say about Jesus' second coming?

CLOUDS: In Daniel 7:13, we hear of the son of man coming in the clouds. Clouds existed between the heavens and the earth. Jesus unites heaven and earth in him and will come again to bring these two realities together.

Often the clouds are a source of great power as in a storm. These clouds have a great power but they bring glory instead of destruction. How do you envision Jesus' second coming?



GLORY: Jesus sees his role as the one who makes visible and tangible the Father. We use the word glory to express the ultimate in beauty or achievement.

Try to talk about your image of this final moment. What makes it glorious? What feelings come as you try to imagine this event?

FOUR WINDS: The gathering would include the totality of creation. Nothing or no one will be excluded.

What does this suggest about this event? Does the thought of it excite you or frighten you?

FIG: The fig tree is one of the most common and prized trees in Israel. It is one of the few trees in that part of the world that loses its leaves. It was another of the ways that a person could keep track of time.

How can watching nature and its cycles enable us to "see God", or understand God's processes?

COME OUT: To come out in the spring is to signal the new growing season.

How does this reality help you understand the new happening that Jesus is describing?

SUMMER: Summer is the time that we have to grow things.

Why do you think Jesus chose an image of summer for this parable?

NEAR: The time of Jesus was a time of closeness for humanity and God. The disciples were attracted to this closeness.

Does the God of Jesus draw nearer to you when you reflect on the Word?

GENERATION: The people of Jesus' time understood this to mean their individual lifetimes.

Since humanity was the last of the generations of creation, could it mean this human generation? If so, what does this suggest?

PASS AWAY: Something that is bound by space and time is limited in duration and can pass away. Jesus' words are not limited, and therefore can reach beyond the limits of created reality.

What comfort do you get from knowing that Jesus' words cannot pass away?

HEAVENS: The heavens were thought to be the residence of the gods, and therefore eternal. We now know that they also are part of the created reality, so they too can pass away.

How does living in the space age affect your understanding of this passage?

WORDS: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jn. 1:1. Jesus is the Word of God, who spoke the words of God.

How do you understand this description of Jesus? How can a word become someone? Something?

KNOWS: Only God knows all. Jesus is content to live with the human limitations we all share.

How does this help us to live now and wait without anxiety for his second coming? How could this help us as we face those predictions of the end of the world?

DAY / HOUR: Much time and effort has been spent trying to figure the time of the last days. Jesus, himself, tells us that even he does not know the day or the hour of this most important event.

Does this lack of knowledge of something come in conflict with your understanding of who Jesus was? How does Jesus' lack of knowledge help you to understand his self-description as the Son of Man?

FATHER: Calling God, Father, in the way Jesus does, ultimately brings him into conflict with the prevailing ideas of God.

Have you ever thought much about how Jesus refers to God his Father?

GUARD: To guard is to protect something or someone.

What are you protecting in your faith life?

ALERT/ WATCH: Being on the alert and watching are two dimensions of the same reality.

How are you planning to be alert and watching? What are you looking for?

HOUSE: Your house is the place where you live and create a life for yourself and your family.

Do you envision all of creation as the house God is protecting?

EVENING/ MIDNIGHT/ ROOSTER CROWS/ DAWN: All these times of the day are times when you can't see too well.

What special kinds of alertness/ watchfulness are required when your vision is limited?

SUDDENLY: Changes often seem to come up out of the 'blue' and catch us by surprise.

What changes in your faith life could catch you by surprise? Or are you beyond surprises?

SLEEPING: Often when we give up a sense of wonder we find ourselves getting sleepy.

What might be causing you to get drowsy in your growth in faith?

PARALLEL TEXTS:

Mk. 13:24; // Mt. 24:29f; Lk.21:25f; **Mk. 13:25** // Is. 13:10; Ez. 32:7; Joel 2:10; **Mk. 13:27** // Mt. 14:62; Dan. 7:13f; **Mk. 13:28** // Mt. 24:32-36; Lk. 21:29-33

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:

Is. 63: 16b-17, 19b; 64: 2-7; [Ps: 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#); 1 Cor.3-9; Mk 13: 33-37

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 64: 1-9; [Ps. 80:1-7, 17-19](#); 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mk. 13:24-37

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The question, you see, is not to prepare (for something specific) but to live in a state of ongoing preparedness so that, when someone who is drowning in the world comes into your world, you are ready to reach out and help . . . to let them be part of your life in God -- that's ministering. - Henri J. M. Nouwen

Herod continued the social and economic traditions of his Hasmonean predecessors. He was at the top of a pyramid that included his sons, among them Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, various and sundry relatives from his home country of Idumea (in the Hebron hills), as well as army veterans who had served him faithfully. On this fortunate group, known as "friends of the king," Herod bestowed large portion of land-which he confiscated from his enemies – in and around Jericho, at Ein-Gedi on the shore of the Dead Sea, in Heshbon in Transjordan and Sebastia in Samaria. These homes were not even the permanent residence of their owners but simply their country estates Gospel accounts indicate that the landlord do not occupy the premises continuously. One of Mark's parables is an

example. Jesus tells his listeners: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my word shall not away" (Mk.13:31) Pg. 30. Hirschfeld, Yizhar & Vamosh, Miriam Feinberg. A Country Gentleman's Estate. BAR 3/05

"Watch!" does not speak of the coming of death, though, does not call me into living awake in the present moment, but calls me into living awake in a presence, "Watch and pray!" I think of Brother Lawrence in his moment of awakening, seeing a dry and leafless tree in winter and knowing it would put forth leaves in spring, would blossom and bear fruit. The tree is like one of the parables of Jesus. I am that tree! I can see the illumining, feel the kindling, as I contemplate the image. I can see the light, feel the warmth – it is the presence of God! Pg. 62. Dunne, John. The House of Wisdom. San Francisco. Harper & Row. 1985.

Second Coming of Christ

The Second Coming of Christ refers to the Christian belief in the future return of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead (see JUDGMENT, LAST), an event that will end the present world order. The New Testament never uses the term Second Coming. It refers instead simply to Christ's parousia ("presence" or "arrival"). In Heb. 9:28, however, the hope of Christ's appearing a "second time" is expressed. This hope originated in the Easter experiences of the first disciples, which communicated a sense of the incompleteness of Christ's work and the promise of its future completion. The early Christians expressed these convictions by identifying the resurrected Christ with the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13) and by combining this text with Ps. 110:1 (as in Mark 14:62). At first the Christian community expected an imminent return of Christ, but it adjusted itself with remarkable ease to the notion of an indefinitely postponed Second Coming. Taken from: The New Groliers Multimedia Encyclopedia

If we would only give, just once, the same amount of reflection to what we want to get out of life that we give to the question of what to do with two weeks' vacation, we would be startled at our false standards and the aimless procession of our busy days....

Dorothy Canfield Fisher

Death can come at any minute, in any way. We do not know what is in store tomorrow, or, whether there is a tomorrow, or even a tonight! But still, we have the golden present. Now we are alive and kicking. What should we do now? Love all, serve all. –

Swami Satchidananda

Mk. 13.1–37: Prediction of the destruction of the Temple and the events of the end (Mt 24.1–36; Lk 21.5–36). Although this section of Mark is often referred to as the Markan Apocalypse, the chapter resembles prophetic texts as well (Isa 13.11; 51.6). The main themes are that apocalyptic messengers are deceitful and that discerning people will keep watch, waiting for the real end (vv. 32–33). Beware implies resisting the false messianic prophets, but it also implies readiness for the true events about to unfold (vv. 26–27). 3: Mount of Olives, 11.1n. Privately, see "Parables and Kingdom," p. 68. 6: In my name suggests that other followers of Jesus would have varying understandings of the events of the end-time. 7–8: In contrast to texts such as Dan 8–12, the events of the end are disordered and cannot be treated as orderly predictions (cf. Isa 19.2; 4 Ezra 13.31–32). Some of the phrases here echo prophetic passages about the invasions of Jerusalem (e.g., Ezek 7.21–27). 9: Although Mark may condemn specific councils and synagogues, they still have authority over some Jewish followers of Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 11.24–25). There is not a clean break from Judaism in the early years after Jesus' life. 10: This verse was perhaps inserted by Mark. Jesus himself probably did not emphasize a mission to the Gentiles, certainly not a mission without the law. 14: Desolating sacrilege, from Dan 11.31; 12.11 ("shiqqs meshomem"), the image of Zeus placed in the Temple by the Seleucids at the outbreak of the Maccabean Revolt in 167 bce. In Mark it may refer to Caligula's image of himself that he intended to erect in the Temple; his assassination in 40 ce removed the threat. 19–32: Apocalyptic motifs are incorporated here (Dan 12; 1 En. 8.2; 83.1), and accompanied by warnings to be alert. 19: Mark alters the apocalyptic prediction in Dan 12.1 (LXX from "until that day")—looking into the future—to "until now" (cf. Mk 10.30). 22: Signs and omens, see 8.11n. Elect refers to those predetermined to be saved. 24–26: Ps 68.4; see 1.9–1.1n. 26: Dan 7.13; see 2.10n. 27: See 3.7–12n. 30: Generation, see 8.38n. 31: Isa 51.6; 54.10. 32–35: No one knows is not necessarily a rejection of apocalyptic reasoning, but rather a further reason to keep awake; cf. 4 Ezra 4.5 [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

"As for opinions of others," he said, "we always have to distinguish the spirit in which they are given. When there is no ill will, they help with the way forward. Other times you see right away that the critics pick bits from here and there to justify a preexisting viewpoint; they are not honest, they are acting with ill will to foment divisions." Pope Francis

Wisdom is not the gathering of more facts and information, as if that would eventually coalesce into truth. *Wisdom is precisely a different way of seeing and knowing those ten thousand things.* Pg. 59. Richard Rohr: The Naked Now

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.2-5 . To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/soul-seeing/life-headed-somewhere-good-advent>

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