

Liturgical Year A

Sunday 1st December 2019

Advent Sunday

Purple



Collect

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 shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Romans 13:11-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Hour has come to wake

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

COMMENT: In this passage Paul urged the Romans to be unceasingly aware of the new order Jesus came to bring. They were to mirror his life in word and action. At the same time, the idea of the imminent “Day of the Lord” (a day when this created order came to an end ushering the full reign of God) may have been adjusted in Paul’s mind because this is the only passage in his Roman letter where he wrote of it. He had already begun to think those who believe in and follow Christ already live in the new Age. The contrast of light and darkness in vss.12-13 reflected the dramatic change of behavior and character which their newly acquired faith brought to those early Christians. Paul’s earlier Letter to the Galatians (5:16-25) had made this same sharp contrast where Paul had compared the life of the Spirit and the life of the flesh. In verse 14 the phrase “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” may refer to the new garments put on the newly baptised as a symbol of the new spiritual life God had given them through faith in Christ. Paul used this favorite image several times in his correspondence. It meant simply following the moral example and character of Jesus into whose Body they had been mystically incorporated by baptism. No less a saint than Augustine of Hippo confessed that this passage brought about his historic conversion. Christians still

witness to the life-transforming experience of an encounter with Christ, though perhaps some do not experience it as dramatically as others.

Matthew 24:36-44 English Standard Version (ESV)

No One Knows That Day and Hour

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^[a] but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Footnotes: a. some manuscripts omit *nor the Son*.

COMMENT: The apocalyptic tradition in the early church lasted until well into the second century AD and frequently underwent revivals in many centuries afterward. Rightly or wrongly interpreting such passages as this, some Christians today live in expectation of the imminent return of Christ in glory, and within their own live times. Matthew drew from at least two different sources in his portrayal of the Parousia or Second Coming. Verses 37-41 and verses 43-44 are found in Luke, but not in the earliest Gospel of Mark. Verse 42, however, parallels Mark 13:35. Expecting the early return of the Messiah/Christ, Matthew had Jesus speak words of encouragement to the early Christians of this community living faithfully in difficult times. Unaware of the time of the Messiah’s coming, they were warned not to be caught unprepared. This type of warning was typical of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It warned believers and unbelievers alike of the coming of the Messiah and the end of history. The early church adapted this message of “end times” to their proclamation of the Gospel. They must also have seen validation of their belief in the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. Matthew’s Gospel probably dates from AD 75 - 80. There is a certain homeliness about the metaphors of the thief in vs. 43 and the women grinding grain. The metaphor of the thief also appears in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 and Revelation 3:3, so it must have been part of the common early apostolic witness. Very likely it could have come from Jesus himself. Undoubtedly he knew the apocalyptic tradition in Israel and wove it into his own message. As an educated Jew, he also knew the Old Testament stories of Noah and the flood. There is a rural proverb from the time before motorised vehicles: “it is no good shutting barn door after the horse has bolted.” Like this passage, it warned of expecting the unexpected. An ancient rabbinical proverb quoted by Sherman E. Johnson in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, said: “Three things come unexpectedly:

the Messiah, the discovery of a treasure, and a scorpion.” (Abingdon, vol. 7, 554. 1951) Again, an old Chinese proverb gives much the same warning: “May you live in interesting times.” Such metaphorical statements come from the ordinary life of common people. No one knows whether any particular event will bring good or evil consequences, but yet we must hold in mind, the eventual consummation of all things in God’s glorious Kingdom. In this day when terrorists stalk many nations around the globe seeking opportunities to wreck havoc on modern societies, we need to be aware that God is ever present and still reigns in love over all of human history. This truth enables us to live with the unexpected in what many regard once more as apocalyptic times. Former US President Jimmy Carter recently gave voice to the urgency of the Christian life today, “Live as if Christ was returning this afternoon.”

Psalm 122 *Laetatus sum* Grail Psalter

℟ I rejoice when I heard them say; “Let us go to God’s House”

¹ I rejoiced when I heard them say:

“Let us go to God’s house.”

² And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **℟**

³ Jerusalem is built as a city
strongly compact.

⁴ It is there that the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord. **℟**

For Israel’s law it is,
there to praise the Lord’s name.

⁵ There were set the thrones of judgment
of the house of David. **℟**

⁶ For the peace of Jerusalem pray:

“Peace be to your homes!

⁷ May peace reign in your walls,
in your palaces, peace!” **℟**

⁸ For love of my brethren and friends
I say: “Peace upon you!”

⁹ For love of the house of the Lord
I will ask for your good. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This pilgrimage psalm rings with the special joy of one who had recently experienced participating in thanksgiving rituals in the temple at Jerusalem. The Feast of Tabernacles comes to mind as the appropriate occasion. The psalmist thought of the city not only as the nation's capital and location of its central shrine, but as a place that offered identity to every Israelite. It represented the glories of the past when, in the idyllic myth, the Davidic monarchy reigned in justice, prosperity and peace, followed by an equally successful Monarch; Solomon. Many centuries had passed since the consolidation of the nation by David with all the tribes of Israel ca. AD 1000. Because such times were long past, the psalmist could only idealise the memory and pray for the welfare of the city as he saw it in his time. Most likely this happened after the reconstruction of the temple had been completed under Zarubbabel in the 5th century BC. His joy in worshipping there was assumed to have, as in all blessings, the spiritual power to bring about its own fulfilment.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because you sent him to redeem us from sin and death and to make us inheritors of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may with joy behold his appearing, and in confidence may stand before him.

Post Communion

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**