

Views from the Pews – Mark 13:24-37 – Be Prepared!

Today is the first Sunday in Advent and the beginning of the Advent penitential season that lasts for four Sundays. The word “advent” is from the Latin *adventus* and means “arrival”. The first two Sundays are orientated towards and anticipate the first coming of Jesus at Christmas while the second two anticipate the awaited return of Jesus in the second coming.

Interestingly the Gospel for today concentrates our attention on the second coming of our Lord rather than His Nativity. The passage set down in the lectionary for today has the heading “The Necessity for Watchfulness” This follows an immediately preceding passage about the fig tree. Jesus points out that if we observe the fig tree and see it shoot forth its leaves and so on we know that summer is near. Likewise, this is a picture of spring and if we are wise to the signs foreshadowed by our Lord we will better understand our place in the future.

This passage might be compared with a passage in the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon). Both passages have the same thrust, namely, that we will be in a better position to anticipate future events in terms of Our Lord’s reappearance on earth. It underscores the heading mentioned above regarding watchfulness.

While the Gospel for today is part of an eschatological discourse, it is open to interpretation. And we should be wary of the more fanciful of such attempts to explain. We can be satisfied that the passage is intended to point us to Our Lord’s second coming without giving detailed explanations along the lines of what might be entailed. After all, when asked about these things His response was to the effect that “The Father knows, but I don’t”.

Faith in the verity of Our Lord’s words as reported in the New Testament will serve us well, and we can rely on Him to lead us.

Happy Advent.

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