

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 24:42a, 44

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Stay awake and be ready!

For you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 12:32-48; L117C

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not be afraid any longer, little flock,
for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

Sell your belongings and give alms.
Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out,
an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy.

For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

“Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding,
ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks.

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival.

Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself,
have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them.

And should he come in the second or third watch
and find them prepared in this way,
blessed are those servants.

Be sure of this:
if the master of the house had known the hour
when the thief was coming,
he would not have let his house be broken into.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 308,

or Luke 12:35-40 in Appendix A, p. 308.

Reflecting on the Gospel

As we continue our Ordinary Time journey with Jesus to Jerusalem we hear more parables and teachings, laden with ancient imagery. As we are familiar with the expression, “Gird your loins,” many in the pew may not know exactly what that means. Though it has the sense “brace yourself,” it literally means something like “tighten your pants.” That image, coupled with “light your lamps” and “be like servants who await their master’s return,” and even “recline at table” tells us we are in the ancient world, in a culture quite removed from our own. But despite these images and the imaginary cultural bridge we must cross, we



can certainly gain a sense of what is meant by these teachings. Some simply prefer to focus on the line “be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, / the Son of Man will come,” shedding all ancient and other imagery.

When we reduce the teaching to this essential element, it becomes easier to grasp the message, which is not solely about the end times. Instead, the exhortation to be prepared applies to each of us as we do not know the time, place, / date of our personal end. In other words, we don’t know when we will die.

It might be more exciting to ponder the end of the world, but it is far more likely that we

will not be around for that event. We can be assured that will be around for the end of *our own* world. And for that we should be prepared spiritually.

This might not be such a happy or pleasant message on an August weekend in the midst of Ordinary Time. But perhaps this is a good time to hear it. When summer plans are winding down and attention is turning to the start of the school year, we ask ourselves if we are ready for the coming of the Son of Man. Or, are we deluding ourselves in thinking that day will never come? When it does, it comes like a thief in the night. Brace yourself!

Living the Paschal Mystery

There will come a time for each of us to pass on from this life. In all likelihood it’s not a topic we discuss much. Most of us live our lives in anticipation of future events, making plans, and carrying on our way. Especially now in the modern world when the science of medicine and the pace of technology has improved day-to-day life a great deal, it seems there is nothing we cannot solve. And yet, tragedy still strikes. Death and loss come. There is the pain of losing someone we love. And at that point we might imagine all we wish we had said or expressed.

The gospel passage today reminds us that we all will ultimately face our own end. But the paschal mystery tells us that after death there is new life. It is not the same, but it will be transformed. Even so, our current life can end in a moment, coming “like a thief in the night.” We are advised to be on guard, to

watch, to act in a way that we will be ready for that day. Where is our treasure? There too is our heart.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, / the Son of Man will come.

To the point: In our church year we have two great seasons of preparation: Advent and Lent. In these times we prepare our hearts and minds, as well as our homes and families, to celebrate the feasts of Christmas and Easter. Though preparation can take on a penitential overtone, it is also filled with joy as a foretaste of the celebration to come. In our gospel today, Jesus counsels his disciples to be vigilant in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man. Whether we meet Jesus at the end of time or at the end of our earthly lives, we do not know the hour or the day when this will occur. May our preparation be intentional and constant, but also joyful as we look forward to an eternity with God.

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews focuses on the person of Abraham. Not knowing what lay ahead of him, Abraham followed God's call to leave his home and family to enter into a new land, which God would show him. Even when it seemed as if God's promises of his own and descendants could not be fulfilled Abraham remained s "for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy has promised that he will return for us, that he is preparing a place for also hold the one who has made this promise to be trustworthy?"

to experience: We can take Abraham as our model in faith as we watch the fulfillment of God's promises. For a time when there will be no more sickness, death, or grief, for the time when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: To be like the servants in today's gospel requires not only vigilance but also extreme patience. The servants do not know when their master will return. If he is delayed will they grow tired of watching for him? Will they begin to lose hope that he is returning at all? The psalmist lifts up the necessity of "wait[ing] for the LORD." We know that God's ways are not our ways, nor God's thoughts our thoughts (Isa 55:8). And yet it is difficult to have patience when we feel like it is time for the Lord to show up and intervene. The psalmist reassures us, "See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who hope for his kindness." As we live in this time of waiting in preparation for the fullness of the kingdom of God, it might be easy to grow weary and to give up hope. But we come from generations upon generations of God's people who despite hardship and persecution continued to "wait upon the LORD." We are called to do the same.

to psalmist preparation: Patience is a muscle that grows stronger with use. Where is God calling on you to wait upon him?

PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING

St. Paul lifts up for us Abraham, our father in faith, as a role model for our own trust in God. Who are the spiritual ancestors who have built up your faith?

Abraham goes forth from his homeland and family to a new land God will reveal to him. Has there been a time in your life when you left all that you knew to embark on a different path? What sustained you through that experience?

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 11, 2019

Gospel (cont.)

Luke 12:32-48; L117C

You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Then Peter said,

"Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?"

And the Lord replied,

"Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time?

Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, the master will put the servant in charge of all his property.

But if that servant says to himself,

'My master is delayed in coming,'

and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful.

That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly.

Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."