The World Will Pass Away, but Jesus Christ Wins

User's Guide to Sunday, Nov. 14

The Lord, his kingdom, his Church and his word will remain forever

Msgr. Charles Pope Sunday Guide November 12, 2021

Sunday, Nov. 14, is the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. *Mass Readings: Deuteronomy 12:1-3; Psalm 16:5, 8-11; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-28.*

As winter approaches and the end of the liturgical year draws near, we ponder the passing quality of this world and the fading of its glories. Jesus' teachings in today's Gospel are stunning words, and we should seek to apply them in our own life.

As the Gospel opens, Jesus is standing just outside of Jerusalem, atop the Mount of Olives with his apostles. The apostles marvel at the magnificent Temple and all of Jerusalem spread out before them.

Jesus challenges their admiration. He warns of wars and rumors of wars and tells his disciples to have nothing to do with those wars. Days of tribulation are coming, when the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky!

In speaking of the heavenly luminaries as being darkened or cast down, Jesus is saying that all the fixed points by which we tell time, know the seasons, navigate and find perspective will be lost to us: The world as the Jewish people know it, centered on the Temple, is about to be swept away. Jesus is now the Temple, the Lamb Sacrifice and the High Priest.

Forty years later (in A.D. 70), the Roman Army destroyed the Temple and all of Jerusalem. In this epic battle, according to Josephus, 1.2 million Jewish people lost their lives. The world as the Jewish people knew it was ending. The Temple has never been rebuilt.

What does this mean for us, some 2,000 years later? Let's consider three basic themes.

1. **The Perspective of Passing:** Toward the end of the Gospel passage, the Lord says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Note the definitiveness of this statement: this world *will* pass away. All of the things that impress us will pass away. We have, here, no lasting city (Hebrews 13:14).

Painful though this perspective may be, it is important and healing. It brings with it a kind of serenity that sets us free. We are reminded not to set down too many roots here so that we are not resentful when this world passes away.

2. **The Permanence Proclaimed:** The Lord tells us that his words will not pass away. Although the world will pass away, the truth and the word of God will remain forever.

Too many people root their lives in passing things. The challenge for us is to root our lives in the word and Kingdom of God, which remains forever. How many have laughed at the Church, announcing that her day was over and that they would bury her? Yet she has persevered until this very day — and has a permanence that outlasts every one of her enemies.

3. **The Priority Prescribed:** If this world as we know it is passing away, and the Lord, his kingdom, his Church and his word will remain forever, what should be our priority? The Lord says, in effect, that we know very well what our priority should be, but we willfully ignore it. Too many people obsess over passing things like physical health while neglecting enduring things like our spiritual health. Clearly it is foolish to book passage on a sinking ship. So, too, is making this world our priority a foolish endeavor.

In the end, Jesus wins. I know because I checked the end of the story. You can look it up (Revelation 20-23). Get on the winning team. Stop trying to amass a treasure here that you can’t keep anyway.

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