

## 1st Sunday of Advent year A 2007

*Matthew 24:37-44*

For the First Sunday of Advent we are given a gospel passage about the *Second* Coming.

Does anyone find this strange?

Advent normally prepares *Christmas*, n'est-ce pas?

Are we not preparing a manger for *baby* Jesus?

It is true that the First Coming of Christ has come to be the focus of the holidays

(at least, theoretically!).

But perhaps the Second Coming

should have a much greater place on the holiday landscape.

“What? Why? I like baby Jesus.”

Well, the Second Coming actually

- brings to completion.
- makes complete sense of  
the First Coming.

Why did the God-man come the first time? To take loving hold of us.

Why will the God-man come again? To take *complete, definitive* loving hold of us.

Complete, definitive loving hold means *completion!* Hello!

The two “Comings” are inseparable.

The First Coming, in fact, beckons the Second Coming.

In terms of purpose, we look to the Second Coming,

for we are made for the *fullness* of love.

(And so: try a few ornaments on the tree that evoke the Second Coming. I'm serious!)

This *apocalyptic* passage speaks to us of the reality of the Second Coming.

Jesus speaks fairly clearly in this text:

Having *already arrived*, Jesus speaks of an *other, future* Coming.

This passage speaks to us *in mysterious terms* of the reality of the Second Coming.

This is not a literal description of what we are to expect.

As the term “apocalypse” suggests, this passage “uncovers ever so slightly”.

(“apocalypse” in Greek can mean “to lift the corner of the veil”)

The Second Coming remains mysterious, although real – in faith.

This passage, in a sense, reveals the reality of *our* lives.

Sounds abstract though, huh?

“I don’t see the connection with my job and my house and my issues.”

Well, normally, Jesus, the God-man, is *the* reality of our lives. *Normally*.

If so, then His definitive Coming, His definitive embrace is *central*.

This passage, as all passages about the Second Coming, is not meant to frighten.

*Au contraire*: such passages are always meant to inspire hope.

This passage is not God saying to Himself:

“I guess the only way to jar them from their self-absorption  
is to scare the living \_\_\_ out of them.”

We are told that

- the date of the Second Coming cannot be predicted  
(unexpected like the Flood...)
- at the Second Coming, there will be a type of sorting, of triage

Neither of these facts should frighten us.

“Not frighten?!? I hate being caught off guard!

And how do I know if I will be taken or left?”

It should not frighten because the focus of our lives, at any rate, is the *person* of Jesus,  
not the event of the Second Coming.

And Jesus is present and all-merciful and faithful.

And we belong to Him now by grace.

In a sense, the event and its date are neither here nor there.

Now, what about the “sorting”? Should we be frightened?

Well, what is this “sorting” of which J speaks?

Is it the simple placing on one side the good, and on the other side the bad?

Well, when one thinks about this with some soul-searching,  
one is obliged to say that such a perspective is too simplistic.

There are no

- perfectly good people *or*
- purely bad people

The good and the bad to be sorted are inside each one of us.

Jesus will come *in glory*, i.e. with manifest, full love.

Love purifies.

The good in us will be safeguarded and expanded.

The bad in us will be eliminated.

God intends this for *all of humanity*.

“Son of Man” is used 3 times in text (and 30 times in the whole of Matthew), which refers to J’ humanity, also has a *collective* connotation (cf. Daniel 7).

The Second Coming is about Jesus

- introducing humanity into glory, i.e. the fullness of divine love
- conferring completely upon humanity the majesty of God

That is a good thing! And it is a promise.

How are we to be ready?

The second reading suggests that we dig more deeply into our hearts.

Saint Paul warns against dark, because self-absorbed, activities.

He invites us to live in the light, which means: engaged in activities of selfless love.

Only God can truly enable us.

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- that we be free of self-absorption
- that we love such that we be ready for the Second Coming.

The extent of our readiness for the Second Coming

is in direct correlation with the extent to which

- we truly love
- we are in current communion with Christ, who pours forth his love

Only love can meet love.

Such true love comes from God.

In the end, only God can prepare us for God.

And so, prayer (and a resolution to love concretely each day) is our best preparation...